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A  
Modern Alchemist

*And Other Poems by*

LEE WILSON DODD

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3

# A Modern Alchemist

and Other Poems

Lee Wilson Dodd



Boston : Richard G. Badger  
The Gorham Press  
1906

AL 1165.7.25

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*Jennies Greenblatt*

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*The Gorham Press; Boston, U. S. A.*

**TO MY FATHER**



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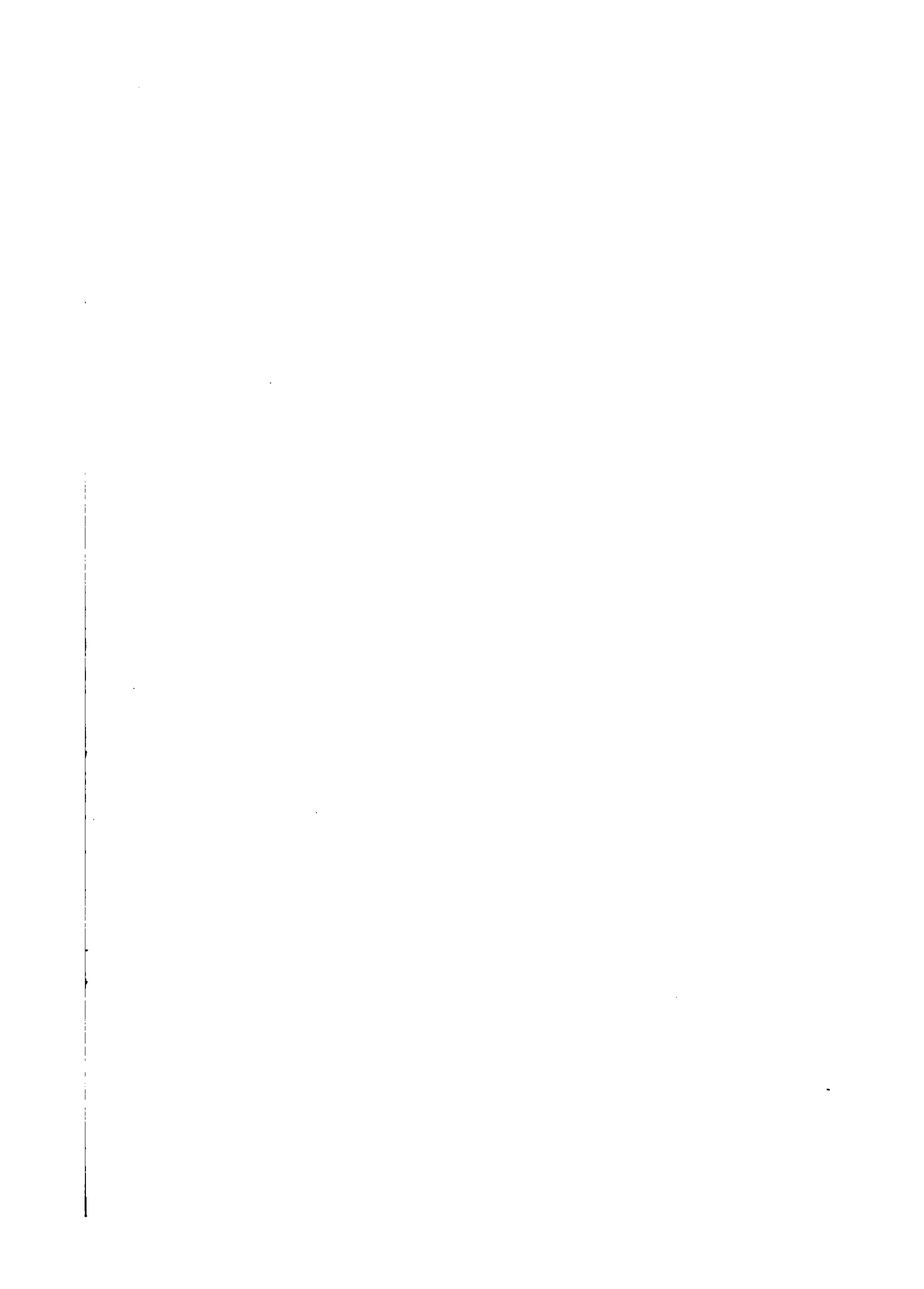
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## A MODERN ALCHEMIST

No senile relic of old ignorance,  
Capped in black velvet, habited in gloom,  
White-bearded, marked with moons, and littered  
round

With mummied store and crooked crucible:  
No; but a man alert, though bowed with age,  
Close shaven, clean of eye, with flickering hands  
Quick to express, if impotent to seize,  
The eternal irresistible mystery . . .  
Life, and its impulse; death, and its decay.

To play with life!  
To take it like a toy in these lean hands,  
Shaping it to my whim!.. Were this not  
worth

Infinite toil and sleep-forgotten hours?  
Long have I lived and labored; the secret still  
Eludes: what shall it profit me? I grow  
Old, and a fever spot burns in each cheek  
Like creeping fire in parchment . . .  
To play with life!

How the hope glimmers up within my brain!  
Into my thought almost the secret springs  
Full-flowered .. a barren seedling! . . .

Minikin efts,

Low, spongy growths of the inveterate sea,  
Eggs of the urchin, frond, and filmy fin  
Winnowing the waters with their light de-  
sires . . .

Whence are these things? Wherein resides their  
power?

What passion animates the speck of form  
Safe in its spiny, labyrinthine cave?  
What law destroys, what mightier law ensures

Continuance out of change, the will *to be*?  
Might I not bring these forth before me . . .  
now?

Might I not build them up with cunning care,  
Mingling the sudden violent elements  
Till the one force that we call Life be freed?  
Might I not mould them to some nobler being,  
Feed them with alien purposes, and fashion  
The outward seeming to the inward urge?  
.. Nay! but this were some triumph in a world  
Grown old and weary, grown old with question-  
ing,  
Weary of seeking answers, to no end.  
.. To do this thing, triumph! .. and then to  
die . . .

Wherefore to die! . . .

Life once within my grasp, might I not snatch  
Infinite being from oblivion,  
Teach pain forgetfulness, and defying death  
Loosen immortal joy throughout the world!  
This were some triumph too! . . .

But I am old,  
Old and enfeebled, and the secret still  
(Though traced even to the final veil, all else  
Dissolved and purged away) nimbly escapes,  
Mocking my struggle . . .

Younger men shall thrive,  
Shall tear the secret from me, and the palm.  
And I shall wither and die, having sacrificed  
All the swift-footed ecstasy of youth,  
Prime's vigor, and the fire-side solaces  
Of wife and wondering children, to this one  
Desire; slave to my purpose, allured at length  
Into a lonely and desolate decay . . .  
Having mocked at life, and lost it!

No! Once more!

Once more! . . .

Too late . . it is too late. Who knows  
But that I sought death shall unmask for me?  
No . . cruel! no! . . Infinite sleep were best.  
For I am tired of truth and would pass on  
Into that silence where all truth lies hid,  
Into the ultimate silence; or live again  
Through delicate forms that question not nor  
strive,

Ferns, and the April flowers, faultless and frail,  
Violets, or fantastic columbine;  
All gracious folk who live and love the sun,  
And morning dews, and the cool palm of night  
Closing their senses up . . .  
All intimate folk who live and are content,  
Feeling no impulse curse vitality  
With the disease of an unending quest,  
With the eternal impotence of toil.

.. Too late! It is too late . . .

"To play with life" ..

How vain it seems now that Death touches me  
Upon the shoulder, saying .. "Come."

.. I come.

## WHAT THE CORONER FOUND

Dearest and Best:— I will not feign a name  
To love you by, as lordlier poets use;  
I would not fill your ears with needless shame,  
Nor offer love your handmaid would refuse.  
I write to you because I dream and live . . .  
Praying for foolish gifts you may not give.

It is not that I hope through some far chance  
To move you with a word's sincerity;  
Love who was wakened in me at a glance  
Speaks but in broken phrases: "Pity me,"  
Masks in a beggar's whine a broken heart;  
Love, all a tyrant, leaves no scope for art.

And I am not your equal, scarce your slave  
To serve you, since you have forgotten now  
The lad you rescued from his sheeted grave,  
Laying your palm, gently, upon his brow . . .  
O God of Love, what life lives in a touch  
To give, unknowing, and to take so much!

You have forgotten. I remember still  
Through all the languid hours of all the days  
Your step, and how your presence seemed to fill  
The room with music and my soul with praise,  
The pallid toneless room, wherein I grew  
Silent, a thing of shadow . . . lacking you.

There, if I turned my head, the lessening cots  
Marked each his burden of unmastered pain;  
There crept such stealthy, slow, devouring  
thoughts  
As feed like vampires on the febrile brain;  
And there came peace upon me for a while,  
Peace, and the patient wonder of a smile.

Peace, for a time; then tyrannous slavery:  
That which was tranquil in me turned to love;  
And then I called on Death to set me free,  
Praying wild prayers you will know nothing  
of:  
But Death was far from me, great Love was  
lord;  
And I, His creature, trembled at a word.

One day you came no more. I guessed the end  
Of all my hopes, knowing what hope was  
dead.  
Another duty claimed you for a friend;  
Elsewhere you ministered, the nurses said,  
While yet I smiled upon them. Was it wise  
To smile thus bravely out of paradise?

Ah, was it wise? I know not. Had I but cried  
Aloud for you, had I cried out your name  
Then, it may be . . . No, no, it is too wide  
This chasm betwixt us! . . . Yet, had I  
striven for fame,  
Risen for your sake to fame, coined my rich  
youth  
To serve you . . . Peace: better to serve the  
truth.

The Truth! Life fashions it as Fate com-  
mands:—  
Being what I am my love was sacrilege.  
Still, still I dream somewhither in far lands,  
Passing some temple gate, turning some page,  
I shall look up and find you waiting . . . No!  
Such dreams are banished many months ago.

For if I love, no less my thought is clear :  
And this I know, love fashions not man's fate ;  
And this I know, having once lost you here  
My dreams are powerless. Through the ivory  
gate  
Such phantoms pass to cheat our souls ; but I  
Found not my future's fabric on the lie.

No: you are you, treading appointed ways,  
And I am I. The mean and sordid stairs  
That scramble to my attic, the foul haze  
Of squalid kitchens, all that drives and dares  
Man's soul to batter at the gates of death,  
Dispart us. No ; we breath no common breath.

But in the silence still I turn to you.  
The slender silence ; for at last there comes  
Even upon this grimy hive a few  
Brief hours when the close swarm no longer  
hums.  
O weary, O unprofitable bees,  
That you must waken from such hours as these !

Why must you waken to the harsh control  
Of hunger and of habit and of crime ?  
Is there no thought of peace at the world's soul,  
No wharfage down the pitiless tide of time ?  
Must you for ever turn again to win  
Life's miserable pittance for your sin ?

And I, what rest for me ? I need no rest  
Who have known love ; I need no other thing,  
Having of all unconquered things the best,  
The power of loving and the will to sing . . .  
To sing her praise who touched my heart with  
song,  
Waiting alone — still waiting — ah, how long !



Ever, for ever . . . The hooded hours renew  
Their vigil; one, touching my lips, sets free  
Words beautiful and terrible and true,  
Charged with a sense of alien mystery . . .  
Of things which are not, though we feel they  
are;  
Brave singing islands off the outer star!

O eyes that fed in mine the impalpable  
Adventurous vision of unfolding love!  
O voice more moving than a merman's shell!  
O hands of gentle influence! Above  
All streams of earthly hope, must not my soul  
Flame at your temples like an aureole!

Ay, and what then? O folly, O unrest,  
To dream away the laws of all the world . . .  
To mould the future to a poet's test,  
Scrolling the heavens like a roseleaf curled!  
O infinite unquenchable desire . . .  
Flame of life's flame, of secret fire, the fire!

. . . *A woman's scream!* My window blind  
with frost  
Shuts out the blackened squalor of the court.  
Poor tortured wife, were not your pains well  
lost  
In sleep? . . . *Just God! That instant, sure  
report . . .*  
*Men calling through the barracks .. one who  
said*  
*Coarsely above the clamor—"Nell is dead."*

Dead — "Nell" is dead; frail siren of the streets,  
Love-starved, with lips reddened to summon  
shame . .

To-morrow's tale is written. Vulturous sheets  
Which lend the fallen miserable fame  
Will mark the spot, counting the tale well told.  
But "Nell" is dead; poor "Nell" was overbold.

Ah! all my dreams of you are dead . . I must  
Go down to her, Nell, reckless Nell! The girl  
Was young for crime and over-young for dust.  
Her pretty hair was tangled curl on curl  
Over her head; the shallow little brain  
Idles no more; she has forgotten pain.

She has forgotten pain . . . I must go down  
To where she lies, and elbow past the men  
Who press about her staring at the gown  
Stained with new blood, go down to her  
. . . and then,  
O then perhaps I shall return and know  
Why life yields unto death. 'Tis better so.

'Tis better so: death quiets life. This night  
So much the still face of a courtesan  
Has taught me, showing strangely calm and  
white  
Under its rouge, peaceful and strangely wan,  
As if tired into silence. Death, through her,  
Invokes the incense of a worshipper.

And thus I burn due incense . . . . .  
Dearest and Best,  
I pass beyond the oblivion of your dreams  
Whither, some guess, Love shall make manifest  
Love, and unite Hope's tenuous, iterate gleams  
For ever . . . beyond the oblivion of your  
thought,  
Whither, some guess, oblivion soothes unsought.

## TO THE GODS OF GREECE

Why must we turn to you, long-exiled Gods,  
Yet turn and worship at dismantled shrines  
With other rites than prayer and sacrifice,  
And wine poured out and coronals of flowers?  
Our land bears not the olive willingly,  
Nor do the rough heels of our village girls  
Trample the sodden grapes to foaming wine;  
There is no august presence on these hills  
Of pillared temple and cool portico,  
Nor from an hundred pediments of stone  
Do you, ye measured Gods, rebuke our toil  
With the disdainful silence of repose.

And yet we turn to you, as if indeed  
Some quivering Naiad lurked within these  
streams,  
Some frantic Satyr scampered down the glades!  
Wearied we turn to you and offer praise  
(Not as in Greece men praised you and were  
glad),  
But sadly, without faith, with aching hearts  
That fain would know the secret of your calm,  
As of a nobler, an austerer kind,  
Who dwell above the strangled tide of strife,  
Serene, unvexed, severely beautiful,  
Holding at heart the certitude of peace.

Thus, now, we turn to you, ye Gods, though now  
We deem ye are not, and that life must run  
Ever and ever onward as a dream,  
Ever and ever onward, and at last  
The fever-tide be spent and earth find rest  
Implacable and pale like the dumb moon.

## THE GODDESS

Only above me the unmeasured arch  
Swept with wide-circling stars, below, the  
plain —

Measureless; and beside me, carved in snow —  
*The Goddess!* . . . at her feet I lay as dead.

Her gaze poured round the silence of my swoon  
A vaster silence; when she spake, each word  
Seemed cut in alabaster to endure.

— But I have long forgot the words she  
spake . . .

And I have long forgotten how I came  
Into that faultless presence. Not suddenly  
From the sad agitations of my kind,  
Not suddenly, but after arduous toil,  
Had I won upward to the gleaming feet,  
Won to the faultless presence . . .

Only above  
The unmeasured dome of silence, the mute stars;  
Below — the plain; beside me, carved in snow —  
*The Goddess!* . . . At her feet I fell. And now,  
Once more a bond-slave of the alien plain,  
What the sure voice spake in my stricken heart  
Blurs to the wordless music of the sea.

But I have seen that *Goddess* ere I die!

## TO V. V. M. B.

Dear Poet: — We have loved too well

The things of earth to shirk their praise;

Yet have we not twined asphodel

Or won the bays.

Who cares for crowning leaves? . Not we.  
The busy city hems us in:  
We'll tell our tales for two or three  
Amid the din.

And if in all a world of men  
Are two or three who like our tales,  
We'll tell them over once again  
Before life fails.

One mutual Mistress we have known,  
Served Her according to our best:  
Who ask for bread She gives a stone,  
Their love to test.

Well, we shall stand the test — be true.  
She'll smile upon us now and then;  
A smile for me, — a smile for you,  
To guide our pen.

A little favor from Her brows  
Is worth the tumult of a sphere;  
We shall win more than earth allows —  
So much is clear.

Then, since we love the earth too well  
To shirk the triumph of its praise,  
What need of pallid asphodel,  
Or paltry bays? . . .

Ours be the wisdom of the strong  
Who seeing Her, make known the bliss! —  
Building the fabric of their song  
To match with this.

## LOOKING BACKWARD

Vincent, my friend,  
The years offend  
With lonely flight, nor will they turn again,  
Having too long deferred  
The serious-jesting word  
Of comrades, cosy once within their cluttered  
den . .

Ah, when?

Vincent, not yet  
Our hearts forget  
The childish rapture, as a shivery pair  
We told of elvish hands,  
Of fierce marauding bands  
Craftily creeping on us in our quiet lair . .  
Ah, where?

Vincent, but now  
The world's strong vow  
(Duty or death) disparts us, and we sigh  
To think that nevermore,  
It may be, as of yore,  
We'll live as neighboring hearts, eye carolling  
to eye . .

Why . . why!

## A FOOT NOTE TO "LA SAISIAZ"

*"He there with the brand flamboyant, broad o'er  
night's forlorn abyss,  
Crowned by prose and verse; and wielding, with  
Wisdom's bauble, Learning's rod . . .  
Well? Why, he at least believed in Soul, was  
very sure of God."*

He, at least! And we? . . . O singer of the  
soul's transcendent might,  
Singer of the quenchless spirit, song-defier of the  
night,  
Thou hast said it, and we honor (even we who  
dare not glow  
With thy soul's divine assurance that the truth  
of God is *so!*),  
Yea, we honor thine undaunted faith in good  
which *must* endure —  
Honor, fain would be thine echo . . . We, alas,  
who are not sure.

Are not sure! We seldom-singers of the Hope  
that man most needs,  
We who have no balms for comfort of the deso-  
late heart that bleeds  
Into hungry silence, we who fear not to pro-  
claim the darker close,  
Yet fail here in full assurance of implacable re-  
pose!

Thou at least couldst leap beyond the maddening  
torture of the quest,  
Thou at least couldst trumpet forth the stirring  
clarion "Love is best,

“Best because the one eternal, irrepressible force  
that strives

“Upward, though the enclosing fleshly clutches  
and with death connives!”

We — alas! Our loves are mortal; fleshly —  
no! but sadder far

In their infinite wistful partings than libidinous  
loves that bar

All life holds of inspiration toward some ultimate  
righteousness . . .

We — alas! our loves are mortal . . . We who  
love no good the less

That we deem it time-encircled; we who strive  
though strife be vain

Starkly for the sheer perfection few perceive —  
and none attain.

Yet, we hail — would fain re-echo to the stars  
thy valorous cry,

Singer of the Soul whose infinite passion was not  
born to die;

Crowned by prose and verse, we hail thee, urger  
of the aspiring clod

*Man!* . . . Ay, thou at least believed in Soul,  
wast very sure of God!

### FIND WINGS!

Joy after all is best; we grieve

Too easily, we modern folk;

The dreams we cannot now believe,

Ah, let them vanish! Smoke is smoke.

We waste our lives in vain regret

For visions that our fathers knew;

Now it is noon, we must forget

Earth's morning magic. Dew is dew.



Now it is noon! The full-orbed sun  
Pours on the earth its fertile rain;  
Life in its fulness has begun —  
Joy beckons! Shall we skulk with pain,

Hide in dim corners of the past  
Like carrion worms that dread the light?  
O, let us find new wings! Too fast  
We cling to the damp vaults of night!

Find wings! The sun will quicken them,  
Will feed them through with strengthening  
fire,  
Will lure them heavenward, will outgem  
Their vans beyond the eye's desire.

Find wings — away! The earth shall burn  
An intense emerald, the sea  
Shall be one sapphire, and return  
The sun's superb redundancy.

Life in its noontide ecstasy,  
Its shimmering tissue of delight —  
O make of it a home! Set free  
Your soul from sorrow's cancerous blight!

Your palace waits . . . The impassioned air,  
The purple splendors of the day: —  
Joy, joy is best! O, have a care  
Lest noontide fail! . . . *Find wings! Away!*

#### A MODERN DRAMATIC POET TO HIS ELDER KIN

Well, I am man as ye were . . . greeting then,  
And would to God I might clasp hands with you!  
My puny fists within your mightier palms

Might serve at least for jesting. Swords or  
staves . .

These were your playthings! We have other  
toys.

Strange how the intenser music of your speech,  
Full toned, harmonious, drowns my childish  
treble!

Nevertheless I call you up by name . .  
Brother and brother; bid you welcome, speak  
Such frozen words as have been given me  
For praise. I mark your wonder. Where (you  
ask)

Where got yon pigmy fellow his ambition?  
Are such our children . . starveling brats?

What song  
Shall burst from this o'er-dwindled race? . .  
And yet

We weave more intricate melodies than yours,  
Great-chested roisterers! With finer ears  
To note the approaching hint of some far flaw,  
And shudder toward the pang. Again you stare!  
. . Confession now—Yours are the vital  
voices.

Still they reverberate, still, still are found  
To roll a deeper undersong than we  
Can mate or master! Yours it was to *sing* . .  
Ours to refine your themes and vary them  
With iterative ingenuity.

Laugh at us if ye will and must; our heads  
Are bowed. The coarser strength that lets you  
laugh

Bears down our febrile indignation. Triumph!  
Still are ye Kings, who rule us from the grave.

## LATHOS AND ELNA

Lathos

We are the goal of all this suffering;  
We live and we depart . . but to what end?

Elna

If we had loved imperfectly, ah then  
I should have fear, and ask as you do . .  
whither?

Lathos

Have you no fear?

Elna, *simply*

No fear.

Lathos

Do you not feel  
That we must in the pulsing of an hour  
Share in oblivion?

Elna

Have we not loved  
Perfectly?

Lathos

Elna! . . But have we not known  
Perfectly? Have we not with temperate minds  
Followed the single impulses of truth . .  
And shall we now, being supreme, forget?

Elna

What is it to forget? The second nears  
Shall snatch us into chaos! Has the world  
Given us birth for this? Out of our love  
Is there no flower of permanence?

Lathos

The truth!

I shrink not from the truth! We are the flower,  
The ultimate blossom of earth's martyrdom!  
Here in this instant of felicity  
The purpose is accomplished.

Elna

But for whom?

Why . . . whither blown away . . . and to what  
end?

Lathos

Still must you question, Elna?

Elna

Still believe!

Yours are the questions, yours the unvanquished  
doubt!  
And yet I chide you not. To me it seems  
We stand for something greater than ourselves:  
You for a greater doubt, I for a faith  
As great . . . never quite fused, yet ever near.

Lathos

Elna, are we not one inseparably  
*Now?*

Elna

— But *forever*?

Lathos

Elna! Give me your hands!  
I will not lose you . . say that we are one,  
That faith and doubt meet in our love and fuse  
Into the one clear *truth* . . .

(*It grows suddenly darker.*)

Elna, *faintly*

The one clear *Truth* . .  
(*more faintly*) How dark it grows . . how  
dark . . .

Lathos

Give me your hands . . . . .

## TO THE UNKNOWN MISTRESS

I have not found — nor have I sought for you.  
Somewhere you lurk, I doubt not, and my eyes  
Will lighten to your glance with young surprise,  
And my heart take the clue.

The clue that leads all men to one sole maid,  
The clue that maddens when it does not bless,  
The clue to devious hell, or happiness . . .  
I shall not be afraid.

(For I have caught rare gleams from generous  
eyes,  
Have heard kind whisperings from prelusive lips,  
Have castled Spain, and have awaited ships  
Where hope's horizon dies.)

I shall not be afraid. I dare not seek . . .  
You, when you near, will find me at my task;  
Will stop perhaps to wonder, or to ask  
A question ere I speak?

For love I know is golden only thus  
When irretrievably he steps between  
The worker and his work, that subtle screen  
Designed to shelter us.

There if love foots it I must welcome him.  
I shall put by all labor when you come,  
And say "Behold my bridal gift — the *Sum*,  
Wrought for my lady's whim!"

So may you put your hand in mine. But when  
(If ever) your feet would wander from my side,  
Sweet, go your ways! Surely the world is wide?  
— I'll to my task again.

Or if I cheat myself, and you evade  
My life for ever, passing too swiftly by —  
What then? Love never born can never die,  
Nor be of death afraid.

Unsought! Unfound! Lo, where I raise my  
heart  
A secret Temple! Pass freely in, if Fate  
Beckon . . . There is no warder at the gate!  
— It shuts when you depart.

### THE BULLFINCH

No, I'll not mock. Tell me again the tale  
About your bird. He was a Prince, you say,  
Set out from Thessaly with belling sail  
Unto that island of the Extremest Day.  
There in a cell carved from a ruby-stone  
A prisoned Princess paled and plained alone.

*"Where is the lover who will ransom me?  
Fair is the lover whom in dreams I see.  
Now comes the white-rose to the red-rose tree."*

How brave he was, how straight, how debonair,  
How the wind sang to him of love and war!  
All that a man might dream of he would dare . .  
Was not the Princess worth long striving for?  
How his eye falconed! how he spurned the West,  
Strung to his purpose, vivid to his quest!

Long, long he sailed . . (I hear your voice, I  
see  
Your eyes grown sombre as with inward sight  
They follow him from fruitful Thessaly

Down the dim, intricate star-paths of the  
night) . .  
Long, long he sailed; and I too saw his smile,  
Shadowed in yours, when first he gained the Isle.

Then to the ruby prison how he toiled!  
Over the diamond rocks where sea-things lay,  
Searching of claw and tentacle, still foiled  
By the keen sword that shore them fast away:  
And in the end all dangers dared and past  
The fiery dome full-fronted him at last.

But how to win *her*? . . (Ah, your voice again,  
Hushed to a sigh with love's sad mystery!) . .  
Few could approach so bright it shone, nor then  
Could pass the flaming portals, find the key,  
Speak the unspoken words! . . Ah, I forget  
Love's spell . . Your tone, your triumph in-  
spire me yet!

Was she not glorious for love of him!  
Were they not fair . . twin children of the sun!  
(And you, your pensive beauty seemed to swim  
Into my blood . . "Dearest, what have I done?  
Forgive me, love me!" . . Swifter was your  
flight!)  
. . Tell me that story over, dear, to-night.

How came the white-rose Princeling to this  
form —  
A little bullfinch with ensanguined breast?  
. . Hark, at the lattice, how the brutal storm  
Ramps for an entry to our summer nest!  
. . . Tell me that story over, dear; Love seems  
More real between us for his gift of dreams.



IN A TOWER CHAMBER

*(The Seven Princesses are present, working a tapestry.)*

The Princess Rosaline

Love is a tyrant!

The Princess Mirabel

Nay, Love is a child . .

The Princess Cecily

You are a child I think, my Mirabel!  
What can you know of Love?

The Princess Mirabel

As much, mayhap,  
As you, dear Cecily . .

The Princess Marianne

Hush, sister, Love . .  
Love is nor child, nor tyrant, 'tis a toy,  
A little idle whistle whereon the lips  
Of men and maids pipe gallantly in spring.

The Princess Fiammetta

Love is a flame, say I, no flood can drown;  
It feeds on tears as tigers feed on blood:  
'Tis mightier . .

The Princess Columbine

Tut! Love's very like a kitten:  
Stroke him: he's soft and warm and comfortable,  
Purrs lazily to show he's innocent,  
Is playful, too . .

The Princess Héloise

Enough, poor Columbine,  
Your graceful kitten Love is none of mine.  
Love shows for me a pair of shadowy wings . .

The Princess Columbine

Is he a bird . . or angel?

The Princess Héloise

Bards and Kings  
Have held him for a God! . .

The Princess Marianne

I'll never bow  
My head, then . .

The Princess Columbine

Pray, dear sister, tell us how  
He won his godship?

The Princess Mirabel

By what trick of art?

The Princess Héloise

His fane he builded in a maiden's heart.

## INVOCATION

Spirit of Life! To thee, while yet clear blood  
Bounds from my heart with rapture born of  
youth,  
While yet some weft of leaping flame remains  
To kindle passion, while as yet my thoughts  
Pierce not to cold serenity beyond  
The flash of earthly love . . . to thee my hymn  
Gives praise for intense being, timeless praise!

Spirit of formless gladness, spirit of joy,  
Thrilling the Universe as poet's mind  
Swift thoughts disclosing beauty! Chainless one,  
Chaotic, fetterless, yet closed within  
The tingling tip of the least leaf in spring!  
Spirit of very madness born of light!  
Thou, thou alone art worthy of ultimate praise  
Poured out from hearts that feel the throb of  
things,  
The secret pulses, the rhythms of the world!

## MORE LIFE . . . MORE!

Set me over the main again,  
Loose me for China, loose me for France,  
Give me to rolic through Spain again  
Or ever the years advance!  
Or ever the sordid clutch of the years  
Tear the leaping heart from my side,  
Grant me a gust of laughter and tears,  
And the breathing earth for bride!  
  
God of Wanderers! send me the seas,  
Blustering blue-throats shagged at the nape;

Shoulder me forth from my prison of ease,  
Spurn me from Cape to Cape!  
Lash me onward from Land to Land,  
Star-bronzed, stained with the brine;  
With the roofless reach of the Iris-spanned  
Soul's lust, that is . . . life! be mine.

### THE GOOD SHIP "THISTLEDOWN"

Brave men who cross the sea in ships  
And trail from town to town,  
Who weather the world on a hundred trips  
From Sandy Hook to Botany Bay,  
They only cruise but a little way  
In the wake of the "*Thistledown*."

And life for them is hard and bleak,  
And many's the man must drown;  
'Tis a sailor's fate the mad winds shriek  
From Sandy Hook to Botany Bay,—  
But the breeze holds true and the month is May  
In the wake of the "*Thistledown*."

And the things you see and the things you hear  
Have never a common noun  
For name of truth to a traveller's ear  
From Sandy Hook to Botany Bay,  
When you sail to the Isles of the Far and Fey  
In the good ship "*Thistledown*."

Brave men may cross the sea in ships  
And beat from town to town;  
Some weather the world on a hundred trips  
From Sandy Hook to Botany Bay;  
But few have sundered the singing spray  
At the prow of the "*Thistledown*."

The man who feels that spray on his cheek  
Wears the starlight for a crown;  
But the thing he feels he never can speak  
From Sandy Hook to Botany Bay,  
For he sings to himself in a wildish way,  
He sings to himself where the sea-girls play  
Round the good ship "*Thistledown*."

### WAYFELLOWS

Do you know the Road to the Other Place,  
The Place that is never Here?  
Where life is sped with a finer grace,  
And men never weep, my dear?  
Know you that Pathway? I've sought it long . .  
But I only travel from Song to Song!

The Road, they say, has never a post  
To point the perilous march;  
I've trudged from mountain to marshy coast,  
I've slept 'neath palm tree and larch;  
Lonely I've sought it, or plunged in the throng,  
As I journey onward from Song to Song.

Is it a shadow trail to the Peaks,  
Rosed with the morning glow?  
Surely a Way the whole world seeks  
Somebody, dear, must know?  
Surely together we can't go wrong . .  
If we only wander from Song to Song!

Dear, what care we for the Other Place,  
The Place that is never Here?  
We've the wide, wide ways of the earth to trace  
Through the glow of a golden year!  
May our hearts beat time as we stride along  
(*Know ye this Pathway?*) from Song to Song!

## SONG

Out, out into the night  
Under the open sky!  
Suck the wind till its cleansing breath  
Clears your soulless soul of death,  
And makes your languid eye,  
Its inner life set free,  
Sparkle frostily  
With re-inspired delight!

Forth to the fiery west  
For the hidden wealth of gold!  
Fairy lore? you disbelieve?  
'Tis the gold shall buy your soul's reprieve!  
Renew your faith of old:  
Stoutly trudge and lustily  
Strive, for rainbow gold may be  
A saving lure and quest!

Up to the Milky-way  
On a shaft of instant thought!  
Bathe in light and purity,  
Scorn malign security!  
Can delight be bought?  
Mount with haste the moonlight stair,  
Climb the Princess Sunbeam's hair . .  
Spurn the earth away!

## IDYL

Where? in what land? Whether beyond the  
earth,

Or in some garden-silence, some wilderness

Half-civil, wholly isolated, two —

A man, a woman — met. Regal they were

In bearing; if disdainful at the lips,

Kind in the eyes; their equal speech serene.

The valley where they walked lay wide and fair,

Screened happily by wooded hills, but south

Sinking in gradual blueness to the sea.

A little river watered it and sang

Sweetly along the pleasure of its way,

A lucid rivulet sliding on unsoiled

Over a bed of golden-seeming sand.

Violets grew beside it: asphodels

(If such they were), white flowers too frail for  
plucking,

Poised like a bubble on the breathing reed: —

Let him who fills the reed with breath, beware!

Lest ere his eyes desire it vanisheth.

Beautiful, beautiful was the day, no sun

Ever filled valley-cup with brighter wine!

Beautiful was the woman, beautiful

In manly mould, the man! All day they moved

Gladly together through their wide domain;

Gladly through flowering fields; gladly at noon

Where wizard oak-trees spread a shadowy lure;

Gladly at evening where the river sang

Hushed vespers music to the virginal stars.

*They loved . . .*

Where? In what secret valley? . . .

Peace!

Tacitly thank me for a pictured hope.

## THE JUDGES

Hear, if you must, my dream; dreams are the  
wild

Unstudied phantoms of a soul oppressed:

Put not your faith in dreams.

I stood condemned  
Before an hundred Judges, clad in black,  
Whose silvered beards flowed down their breasts  
like rain.

The room was vast, four-square, and lighted ill  
By sudden flames that leaped now here now  
there,

Lacing the gloom at restless intervals.

Before me kneeled a slave in ebony

With covered face, and in his lifted hand

He grasped an agate cup.

Then, in my dream,  
I spoke, and the words issued from my lips  
As from another's, for I hearkened them  
As they had been another's: but, no less,  
The words were mine . . .

"Judges, I am condemned  
To die: now if I speak my words shall be  
Brief, and if wisdom prompts them, better so.

"I am a man, passionate like a man,  
Yet firm to purpose good; all men are thus,  
Fashioned in some rude way, by some rude hand,  
Out of the sullen forces of the world.  
And I have lived not always honestly,  
Though hating all dishonor; and I have striven  
To cleanse my thought, though in the very act  
Some foul distemper fastened on my soul.  
Good have I done and evil, and have loved  
Strong men and clinging women; men whose  
strength



Impelled me to some valorous deed, and women  
Whose weakness often vanquished me through  
tears.

And one man I have hated with a hate  
Pent in the loathliest grotto of my soul;  
And I have loved one woman with a love  
That conquered in me all abased desires.  
Let it suffice that manlike I have lived,  
That I have dared to suffer and enjoy,  
Nor ever called on death. Yet now I die.

"Think not I cry upon you now for life,  
Who never called on death. Such life was mine  
As I must wonder at . . . so full it seems,  
So full of things forgotten. Nor would I now  
Bring back the sleeping memories of past days;  
For some were bitter sad; and if some hours  
Were meted to me for a keener joy  
Than now I know, this too I know, that joy  
Is brief, and in its briefness lies a pang.

"Therefore I thank you now who have con-  
demned;  
Yet not you verily, ye are but forms  
Hooded and cloaked about with seeming shade:  
But that sole Power I thank which gives us  
life . . .

(A breathing time, a crowded interval  
Of strife and fervor amid the changing hours;  
An undeterred, incessant masquerade,  
A clamor of voices and a whirl of hands!) . . .  
That Power I thank for life which has been  
mine;

And now that Power, called by whatever name,  
Cried after, sought for, struggled toward, de-  
sired

So long . . . that Power I thank for seemly  
death,  
Most just, most seemly, restful, though deferred,  
Though whispered of with hushed and pallid lips  
That have so often spoken foolishly.

“And now the cup! Who that has lived indeed  
Would ask more space for living? . . . Is not  
Death  
Seemly and just, impartial and desired,  
When at the last ye Judges name His name?”

. . . So, having said, I raised the cup on high,  
And all the rondure of its polished shell  
Gleamed, and the liquor hissed within like fire!  
Then with a cry, I drank . . . and, with a cry,  
Leaped into life!

. . . Put not your faith in dreams.

### “THE SCAB”

A little food, a little fire  
For me and mine is my desire;  
I am not strong like other men,  
But I must do the work of ten,  
Hated of all, that I may earn  
Shelter, and food, and fire to burn.

Ye strike me down, I rise amain;  
Ye chain me, and I break the chain;  
There is no power (tho' I am weak)  
Can slay me! Nature's voice I speak,  
And Nature's lust in me will earn  
Shelter, and food, and fire to burn.

"I HAVE FORGOTTEN TEARS" . . .

I have forgotten tears. Long since  
The arid courses of my life  
Are slag and cinders. If I wince,  
It is enough. The sullen strife,  
The imperturbable conceit  
Of too perturbed humanity,  
Have wrought a torpor, cold, complete,  
Within: — 'tis not through tears I see.

I see with chill eyes undisturbed  
By passion's life-discoloring glass,  
Gold-drunken peoples custom curbed,  
Pale luxury's obscene morass;  
Religion's fervent hands that lift  
Heavily Heavenward in gyves;  
Art's impotence, and all the drift  
And futile stir of human lives.

. . . . .

These things I see — not these alone.  
The pure, grave student I discern,  
Careless of fame — a jewelled stone  
He will not stoop to overturn;  
I see frail women worn with pain,  
Whose eyes are gentle, helpful, sure;  
I see Truth's shield above the slain  
Marked with one flaming word . . *endure!*

Endure! I have forgotten tears: —  
We have small time for weeping, we  
Who stumble on ere morning clears  
And the brave sun o'erleaps the sea!  
Small time for tears: — while night and storm  
Ring us with horror, down the blast

Leading our broken van, what Form  
Gleams — calls (ye hear it?) "*Light . . at  
last!*"

. . . . .

What Form? what phantom of desire?  
What spectral promiser of good,  
Ill seen through mirk as by the fire  
Of sapless, long-decaying wood?  
What ancient mimicker of hope  
Whose sinister miming soothes our fears?  
Lo, now it vanishes! — we grope  
Blindly. I have forgotten tears.

. . . . .

Forgotten tears? Ah, love, your hand —  
Your hand in mine! I shall not quail  
This side the fabled promised land;  
The heart you need, dear, dare not fail!  
Your hand in mine. I had forgot  
So much . . the long gloom disappears.  
Yet, yet, ah yet if *you* were not . . .  
Live, live! I shall remember tears.

## THE DREAMERS

We can know so very little  
Of the much there is to know;  
Human life's so very brittle,  
Human wit so very slow,  
That we dreamers deem it better  
Just to sit out in the sun,  
Undisturbed by law or letter . .  
Or the things we might have done.

True, we might have builded bridges,  
But the castles that we build  
Please us rarely; men and midges  
Fill the world, while these are filled  
With faint presences of beauty,  
Eyed serenely, tender lipped!  
Ah, we might have done our duty  
Ere love's opiate we sipped!

As it is, we do no murder  
Save to fictions of the brain;  
And we speak no angry word, nor  
Cause the living lively pain:  
We are dreamers, star desirers,  
Shadows on life's southern wall.  
Ye are doers, or admirers!  
We are dreamers — that is all.

Chide us — we will sleep the longer;  
Praise us — we will sleep no less;  
Kill us — is our sleep not stronger  
In the grave? No bitterness  
Mars our rest. We know but little  
Of life's meaning. So we sit  
Idly, for life's term is brittle . .  
Truth unknown that circles it.

## THE EMISSARY

"Vanity, vanity, vanity," I said,  
"Always the world and ever vanity."  
"Why do you dull your empty eyes on me?"  
She cried, "Back to your city of the dead!"

"But not alone," I whispered, "not alone;  
"The way is long, and I have need of you."

She laughed aloud, "Not yet, I am not through  
"With vanity!" Her laugh was like a groan.

"The way is long," I whispered, "and the leaves  
"Bend from me as I pass, O come with me . .  
"Leave the sick world's insatiate vanity;  
"Alone with loneliness your lover grieves."

She laughed aloud, "No lover now of mine:  
"Back to your city of the unrestful dead.  
"My love was gay, my lover's lips were red!"  
I saw upon her lips the stain of wine.

"The way is long," I whispered, "and the stones  
"Creep from the noiseless terror of my feet;  
"Come with me, once you found my kisses  
sweet."  
"Back, back!" she pleaded, as the night-wind  
moans.

On my love's lips I put the kiss of death,  
Pale, pale they grew beneath the stains of wine;  
On my love's brow I sealed a livid sign,  
And she went with me where none travaileth.

"The way is long," she sighed, "but you are  
near;  
"The silly stones creep from our moveless feet,  
"The leaves bend from us . . ah, but life was  
sweet! . .  
"Why does the grass sway downward as in  
fear?"

## SALOME

What dream is this of dusky arms  
Circled with cumbrous gold, what dream  
Of supple feet no sandal harms?  
List! for the cymbals seem  
Faint in their silver clashings, thin and faint,  
And a low flute afar whispers a dreary plaint.  
Yet list! the rhythm deepens . . list! the air  
Throbs with a freer music, wild and shrill,  
And the lithe, shadowy arms weave to the  
rhythm's will,  
Tossing the clouded hair!  
Veil after veil floats from her, gossamer things  
Shot through with shimmering amethyst! Loud  
rings  
The canorous chorus . . list! for now she sings  
Stark, ancient words of the heart's mad desire!  
Her body is a snake, or writhing tongues of fire;  
Now a wind-smitten lily, now a pard  
Crouching in stealthy malice! Scents of nard,  
Burnt, heavy perfumes, sandal-wood and myrrh  
Smoke from the brazen braziers, smoke and blur  
The senses of a King — her worshipper.  
The clamor muffles to a breath, the flute  
Sighs for a little . . hush! and now is mute.  
Alas, what dream,  
What dream is this of luring, dusky arms  
Weighted with gold, what perilous, rich dream  
Of beauty that alarms  
With irrecoverable malignity!  
Ay, this is she . .  
Salome, daughter of Herodias,  
Whose bitter, terrible fame none may surpass,  
For it passes not away:  
Ay, even to-day

Poets her name repeat!  
Nor yet forgotten are those gliding feet,  
Nor yet forgotten tho' the world be gray.

### A PRAYER TO DEATH

The word is said,  
We cannot save her;  
The hands that lave her  
Cleanse but the dead.

She does not know  
The word is spoken;  
Lest hearts be broken  
'Tis better so.

Delay not, Death!  
Strike soon, the sorrow  
Is more to-morrow  
And tarrieth.

Kill her to-day,  
Be kind, O slayer!  
We'd not delay her . .  
Take her away.

We can but wait.  
If Thou let her languish  
We wait in anguish . .  
Be swift, O Fate!

Be swift, be sure,  
With a bright dream take her;  
Though a star-song wake her  
Our dreams endure:



Bad dreams, till Thou  
Sweep all dreams from us,  
And overcome us . .  
More kind than now.

For she will sleep;  
But of her forsaken  
We still must waken,  
We still must weep.

Take her away,  
We'd not delay her;  
Be kind, O slayer . .  
Kill her to-day.

## THE TWO DEATHS

What tawdry image of a fleshless foe  
Is this? . . *thou*, Death! Thy form I did not  
know

In this vile masquerade.  
For thou art fair to those who unafraid  
Slip out of life to silence, with thy hand  
Leading them on to the inviolate strand  
Where equally the wise and foolish go.

Appear not so  
Death, unto these; but like a pensive boy  
With torch reverted, look into their eyes:  
That they may see what joy  
You bring, and what they lack of joy surmise.

## AT THE THRESHOLD

Blue eyes looking at the world,  
Childlike, wondering . .  
Is it but a plaything twirled  
By a golden string?

Strange that I could tell you tales  
You would weep to hear . .  
Even now your flower face pales,  
Sensitive to fear!

Life, you guess, is not so sweet  
As it seems to be:  
Yet with timid eager feet  
Questing wishfully,

Questing after joy, you must  
Seek the secret clue,  
Seek it haply in the dust!  
— Will your eyes be blue?

Will they still be blue and fair  
When the world seems gray,  
When your heart aches for the prayer  
You have ceased to pray?

Ay, blue as heaven seen through a rift  
Of streaming cloud; but more  
Grave, with a more tender lift  
Toward beauty than before.

"PEACE! COUNT THE CLOCK!"

Not yet austere glad, nor sad,  
I count the progress of the sun:  
The clock tells *one*.

I am but as a flame, the name  
Of constancy not yet my due:  
The clock tells *two*.

A little while and I shall hie  
Me downward where the slow things be:  
The clock tells *three*.

Forget not when I pass the grass  
Will wear such greenness known of yore:  
The clock tells *four*.

Nor when I am withheld be quelled  
By tyranny of love, nor strive —  
The clock tells *five*.

Only remember me as he  
Who held the truth too great to fix:  
The clock tells *six*.

Too great to fix in schools, with rules  
Made rigid for a line to heaven:  
The clock tells *seven*.

One who was keen as fire to tire  
The dogged presence of his fate:  
The clock tells *eight*.

Yet one who knew that *first* man's thirst  
Is quenched with undiluted wine:  
The clock tells *nine*.

That when Time's fingers trace the place,  
There is no coward's refuge then:  
The clock tells *ten*.

O hands inexorable to spell  
One word no mortal hope may leaven —  
To tell *eleven*!

O silent hands that sleep yet creep  
The dial's round . . Strike to the helve!  
The clock tells *twelve*!

### CHALLENGE!

If the soul of the world is good,  
If the heart of the world is pure,  
Sound to the core like seasoned wood . .  
Wise, sane, secure: —

Then, tell me, Vapid of Soul,  
As you sip your syrupy brew,  
How came this clear sweet wine of the bowl  
To the languid lips of — *You*?

How comes it that You are blest  
With a sense that what *is* is right,  
When the fell facts shrink from a strong man's  
test  
Like vipers curling to bite?

If the soul of the world love You,  
Give You the wine of its joy —  
Then I pray on my knees for cummin and rue,  
Lest the stark world prove a toy!

The stark world weary with pain  
Has room for love, and for such

As know love best, and are fain  
To lean on love as a crutch.

But it has scant room for the fool  
Who hears no wail of distress,  
While he dreams o'er his face in a silver'd pool  
Of mawkish happiness.

Rather give me that man  
Who hates the world for its ill,  
Than him who can see no flaw in the plan  
From *his* inch-wide window sill!

#### ADONIS TO APHRODITE

Then at the border of the wood, where first  
The giant oak trees grapple with the shade  
And hold it captive, the boy Adonis turned  
And flung back words of shrill unfeigned delight:  
And in her bower she heard them . . . Aphrodite  
Whom all men worship . . . all save this peevish  
boy.

Queen of the Paphian island, Aphrodite,  
It is not you I worship! No, proud queen  
Of heavy and unrestful hours, and of  
Such men as no man reckons honorable!  
I will not willingly give praise to you  
Whiles the elusive arrowy Artemis  
Loosens her hounds and beckons down the  
glades  
And bids me follow! . . .

I am too beautiful? . . .  
But the Gods give us beauty as they give  
Flowers to the lap of Spring . . . a little while;  
Only a little while and they depart,

And beauty lingers only a little while.  
I shun your kisses, fierce Idalian,  
Lest they scorch up the vigor of my youth  
And leave me blasted! Shall a boy find ease  
Through languorous and insatiable ecstasies  
Of love . . . or following the shadowy stag,  
With the strong-singing wind within his hair?  
Henceforth I mock your passion! . . . and where  
    the boar  
Bristles with fury in the treacherous brake,  
There shall you find me, find me pressing close  
With lithe sure limbs strung to a nobler quest  
Than subtle-soft and feverous indolence;  
Shall find me nor lure me thence, for nevermore  
Thrice beautiful Idalian, nevermore  
Shall any lure inspire me to your arms.

. . . . . And Aphrodite heard him in her bow-  
    er,  
And beat her breasts, and knew what horrid  
    chance  
Would meet him in the brake, and gave no sign.

#### AFTERMATH

When Greeks bear gifts, beware!  
    Ah, had I known  
The gentle perfidy of loosened hair,  
    The cozenage of tone,  
I had not now been stripped of youth, and bare  
    Of honor . . . . and alone.

She came to me like truth,  
    With open brows,  
And the bright candid lips of joyous youth.  
    The jealous world allows

No unmixed joy: — she came to me, good sooth,  
To lighten all my house.

And I was glad of her,  
And made her bower  
Most like the fane of some proud worshipper  
Who kneels to love each hour.  
I would not willingly have had her stir  
From view, lest some harsh power

Might vex her sweet content: —  
O honest fool  
Thou couldst not carve for her a continent  
Where she alone might rule!  
Thou couldst not bind the boisterous element,  
Nor put the winds to school.

What didst thou strive for? She  
Gave little heed  
To thy poor gifts; her valiant vanity  
Was of another breed.  
Thou canst not, fool, pleasure the restless sea,  
Nor plenish all its need!

Peace, she is vanished — peace,  
Unquiet heart.  
Slave to her beauty, shall not this release  
A nobler calm impart?  
What though her temples bore a golden fleece,  
Late tarnished in the mart!

Bearer of subtle gifts: —  
Ah, had I known  
The scorpion sting of beauty, and the shifts  
Of wheedling sigh and tone,  
I had not now sung to a lute, whose rifts  
Upbraid her, . . . lost, alone.

## ODE

*(Imitated from Olivier de Magny)*

Lest pleasure flee us ere we fly  
Beyond the glance of pleasure's eye,  
Friends, let us dine in frugal state,  
But let our fare be delicate.  
And with us let our chums Catullus,  
Propertius, Ovid, young Tibullus,  
Sit, as if Rome were not a shade,  
And sing us the rare songs they made.  
And let there be flowers white and red —  
Roses and lilies, friends of mine —  
And garlands for each singing head,  
And honey-hearted wine!  
To-morrow death may come and take  
The gayest of our troop, and say  
*"Sweet roisterer 'tis the hour to slake  
Your thirst with darker wine . . . Away!"*

## BENEATH APPLE BOUGHS

### I

Cool green and paling blue,  
Leaves patterned on the sky,  
Blossoms in pomp of May,  
Stirred as a breeze sifts through  
Stealing their souls away.  
Now one by one they fly . . .  
Blossom or butterfly? . . .  
Showering me as I lie,  
A nympholept of the day.



## 2

The sloping orchard leads  
 Down to the valley fields;  
 Far hills are faint in the haze  
 Of languid light. As I gaze  
 The vision wavers and yields  
 To a flitting dream,  
 And I seem to hear  
 A ripple of voices or else a stream  
 That bubbles near.  
 Then I wake and study the weeds  
 A foot from my nose;  
 Then I doze  
 And the ripple of dream succeeds.

## 3

Bees are busy above me,  
 Droning with sleepy toil;  
 From blossom to blossom, from tree to tree  
 They slant:  
 At my ear a fidgety ant  
 Tickles his way till I suddenly foil  
 His explorations; the sun like oil,  
 Clear as amber, drips from the leaves.  
 A riotous bobolink deceives  
 With a glory of song, as though a dozen  
 Warbled together, cousin and cousin!

## 4

Cool green and paling blue,  
 Blossoms in pomp of May,  
 Slow sunlight drizzling through:  
 Dreaming the noon away  
 I smile to the patterned sky;  
 Blossom — or butterfly? —

Showering me as I lie  
With languid vision that yields to a dream  
Of liquid voices and laughing stream.

5

To-day I have taken ease —  
All the antient liberties —  
With my brothers the apple-trees!  
I have felt their sap in my veins;  
My thoughts like blossoms have been  
Lucidly fair — without sin.  
I go home with the evening breeze,  
But the calm of noon remains.

IN THE SILENCE

Here at the hill-top . . rest . . tranquillity.  
Hush; do not move; draw deep  
This breath of freedom, which is never free,  
Because we may not keep  
The pureness and the silence and the calm,  
The soul-anointing balm  
Like to a waking sleep.

O, hush; speak low . .  
Linger a moment ere you rise to go.

This moment that is yours, this waif of rest  
Quieting now your breast,  
Think that it will not follow as you pass  
Down to the populous places from the grass  
Of this fair slope;  
The ever-narrowing scope  
Of your calm vision must narrow too this sense  
Of world-pervading peace, immutable, im-  
mense . .  
This harvest-tide of hope.

O, hush; a little longer . . . nay, the dream  
Mirrored an instant on the moving stream  
Of circumstance,  
Who shall withhold, restrain?  
The unsummoned chance  
Who shall recall again?

### THE OLD POET TO HIS SOUL'S FRIEND

You, my friend, know that Love alone is wise;  
Gladly, O gladly would I place my hand  
In yours and feel again the firm caress  
Of friendship; gladly would I know your eyes  
As once I knew them; gladly from the stress,  
The stubborn urge of pitiless circumstance,  
Would I win free to meet you where you stand  
    Apart, and share once more the comfort of  
        your glance.

I may not, though I would. Therefore these lines  
Must greet you as my presence. May they seem  
At least to speak of me as one who kept  
In memory always youth's too frail designs;  
Though now age finds me guilty, an adept  
Dealing in trickery, in lies . . . Ah, yet  
Believe me as I was, believe our dream  
    Come true, and (dreaming thus) what I have  
        been — forget!

## THE POET

The poet's lips are eloquent not long,  
But once or twice he stirs our secret tears,  
But once or twice lends courage to the strong,  
Strength to the weak . . then lightly disappears;  
Leaving some little stave of valiant song  
To win slow recognition down the years.

## A POET'S PRAYER

Three gifts, Apollo, grant to me,  
That from the soul's locked harmony  
Free song may issue silverly:  
An ear to hear, an eye to see,  
A still unclouded memory.  
So shall my watch-light ever be  
Sincere, supreme lucidity.

## A DECADENT POET

He plays with words like a voluptuary,  
But cares no whit for noble thought or deed;  
His only care to trace shy moods that vary  
A life made barren by a hopeless creed.  
The decent veil of health has fallen long since  
From his tired soul's too shameless eidolon;  
Naked it stands, but we who view it wince,  
So piteous is the shape to look upon . . .  
Pallid, inert, stripped of all dignity,  
The wan cheeks furrowed by unmanly tears.  
Thus does he carve his soul for all to see;  
Lifelessly lives; dies — leaving to the years  
A chill excrescence of funereal verse,  
Like the soiled plumes upon a pauper's hearse.

## AVE

Carducci, hail! Hail, pagan poet! None  
Has better loved the laughter of the sun,  
Has better loved the earth's abundant breast,  
Whereon the opulent summers sink to rest  
Reluctantly, one after one, and thence  
Draw the rich fountains of their opulence!  
Your nature is like summer, ample, free  
(Hail singer of the heart of Italy!)  
From winter's chill secretive sophistry;  
Winter, who frights us for a little space  
By drawing death's white veil before his face,  
Who thwarts the sun with shadow . . . You  
are not one  
To fret with vapors the impetuous sun!  
Life, life's abundance, these you still proclaim:  
And life seems lordlier when we name your  
name!

## INSIGHT

My friend? . . . You thought him ever gay,  
Radiant, amenable to joy,  
An ageless boy,  
One who would laugh lest laughter die?  
Then you misdeemed him even as I  
Misdeemed, who thought him ever gay —

Till, once, our eyes met! In his eyes  
Smouldered a passion that was pain;  
And once again  
Mirth faltered while the back-log burned . . .  
I turned to look at him, I turned  
And the old pain was in his eyes.

## THE DEAF POET TO HIS MISTRESS

I watch your hands move o'er the keys  
Each firm like finger equal to your will  
And O, my very soul is slave to these.  
Slave to a music time shall never kill.

I watch your lips part gently then.  
And in my soul I feel an answering tune:  
So may some blind sea-farer tremble when  
Across his sentient eyelids creeps the moon.

## TO MY MISTRESS . . . PLEASY

Just by the sidelong flicker of her eyes  
I knew her false, yet how might I withstand. —  
Where other men had yielded, brave and wise. —  
The pressure of her hand?

Nay, by the palor of her lips I knew  
Her doubly false, in that she loved me not:  
But when her lips slow murmured "I am true,"  
Their warning I forgot.

And now that she has used me as a slave,  
Bending my willing service to her will,  
As other men have served her, wise and brave,  
Know that I serve her still.

## LOVE AND THE POET

A maiden loved him, wooed him with her eyes;  
He felt their limpid blueness like a dream,  
So rhymed of love with a divine surprise!  
Love (not the blue-eyed maiden) was his theme.

"O luring lips!" he sang, who knew them not;  
"O burning kisses!" But his soul was strong,  
Silent, aloof, a sentinel of thought,  
Dwelling a hermit on the heights of song.

### THE NE'ER-DO-WELL

Behold him sitting idly! One nerveless hand  
Dimples the quivering pool; the netted leaves  
Weave intricate shadow-magic in the sun —  
Fluttering adumbrations, flickering artistry,  
Flecking his upturned face with luminous shade.  
Behold him sitting idly: but far away  
Faint, cloudy summits mystically allure —  
Another world, they seem, another star.  
And it may be that even now with wings  
Of morning radiance he is there, snow-plumed,  
Sun-glorified, a free-born of those peaks  
Minting the golden silence into song!

. . . Behold him sitting idly; one languid hand  
Circles with amethyst the tremulous pool.

### FOR ONE SINGING

The faultless oval of your face,  
The plaintive beauty of your eyes,  
Within whose sad appeal I trace  
Passion that sleeps — not dies . . .

These move me, these! O lips too pure  
For passion, may your song express  
Only unrest a song will cure —  
Lest love prove pitiless.

## WORD WEARINESS

We men who juggle with our wits find words  
Wondrous to wordless men : we phrase all moods,  
Easing the world through utterance of its pain,  
Its hope, its large forbearance ; we are tongues  
Given to conscience, we unpack the heart  
Of its dull measureless freightage of despair,  
Or if love rules it gloriously we chant  
Pæans of gladness ! We are voices, pipes,  
Instruments sighed upon by time and chance —  
From age to age articulate messengers.  
All this we are, quickened by Destiny —  
And much we are not ! For the loves we sing  
Warm us not ; for the wisdom that we speak  
Makes us not wise ; for all the radiant dreams  
We weave are lustreless in our sight ! . .

Words, words,  
Words only pleasure us, and our pulses chime  
Only word-music, and our hearts beat out  
Passionate — *words!*

We are sick of *saying!* God, were we dumb, who  
    knows  
What solace of tacit feeling might be ours,  
What silent homeliness and unlettered peace !

## BATTERY PARK

Even from Wall Street one may see  
The hopeful spire of Trinity ;  
And frowning Broadway holds between  
Its jaws the fruit of Bowling Green —  
A toothsome apple 'tis, I ween !  
But pass beyond, a Park invites  
To a brief Eden of delights,  
Where up a noble bay the sea



Sweeps to the rounded Battery.  
    . . Now who may loiter here with me  
Shall steal an hour right pleasantly!  
*All troubles here seem far away,  
    And to-day like yesterday.*

I

Spacious? no: nor over shady;  
Here the trim "type-writer lady"  
Walks at noon this May-time weather —  
Sometimes three or four together,  
Arm in arm; and here the clerk  
Smokes away his morning's work,  
Staring with incurious eyes  
Down the bay; and here one buys  
"Extras," loafing for a "shine,"  
With the sun for anodyne.  
Troubles here seem far away,  
And to-day like yesterday.

2

All the benches fill at noon,  
Offering to all the boon  
Of a restful snooze: — one sees  
Stolid vagrants take their ease  
With the golden sun, or trees  
Yielding scanty shade. The Pole  
Here invites his lonesome soul;  
Swarthy men of Sicily  
Hold this little Park in fee;  
Greek, Norwegian, Irish — all  
Elbow here; the squat, the tall,  
Spruce or ragged, sick or well,  
Drinking deep the fresh, keen smell  
From the boon, inflooding sea.  
Here at least a man is free  
To *delay* his destiny.

## 3

Out along the bay the ships  
 Slowly pass, while nearer slips  
 Snorting tug or ferry by.  
 Many pastimes lure the eye: —  
 Yacht and lighter, sail and spar,  
 Argosies from Malabar,  
 Rio, Corfù, Halifax —  
 With their salt-incrusted stacks,  
 Where the spume of angrier seas  
 Smote them: from the Hebrides  
 Came those whitey smudges, or  
 From the coast of Labrador.  
 Then across the bay you spy land,  
 The low hills of Staten Island  
 Blue with haze; but first you see  
 The towering torch of Liberty,  
 With tiny vessels at its base.  
 Such sights as these have spells to chase  
 The blackest spectres care can raise.

## 4

Faces, faces, pass and pass:  
 Some as if a knotted glass  
 Had distorted them, and some  
 Fixed, expressionless and dumb:  
 Others smiling, here and there  
 One to make each gazer stare  
 For its beauty; fewer still  
 Carved for conquest, power and will  
 Lining them; but seldom one  
 Imaging beneath the sun  
 Any soul-abiding peace.  
 Faces, faces — let them cease,  
 Lest the sad incessant stir

Weary out the loiterer : —  
Close your eyes for better ease,  
Let them cease.

5

Lethal Park, my verses tell  
Little of your May-time spell,  
Little of your varied sights,  
Little of the odd delights  
That you offer every day ;  
Shameless, loafing where Broadway  
Cuts between the soaring walls,  
And the roar of business falls  
Heavily on ears of lead :  
Little have my verses said  
Of your gracious "drowsyhed."  
Verily none other seems  
Dedicated so to dreams ;  
In no other Park are found  
Age-long idlers in profound  
Somnolence, breathing clay  
Basking in the tide of May,  
Mute, oblivious of sound.

6

*Basking in the tide of May,  
Trouble here seems far away . . .  
And to-day like yesterday.*

## ZANY-WHILES

There's a mad play-house in New York, its name  
Is nothing to my purpose: one sees within  
A host of quaint unmannered rogueries,  
Clowning in colors, and siren women, too,  
With bright abbreviations of their dress.  
Add to the galimaufry a merry din  
Of thoughtless blatant music, that when all's  
over

Fidgets on nimbly through the mind's unrest,  
Till the slow heels go dancing! Odd zany-whiles  
I like to wander in an hour or two  
And play at make-believe; forget that life  
Moves onward with a large reality,  
While my freed senses take their fill of folly,  
Frisking at topsy-turvy-tickle-toes  
Down the whole gamut of inanities!  
Of course it's vulgar; but I never feel  
Degraded — only gayer, more fantastic,  
After an evening with these Fanfreluches.

. . . . .  
The program told me nothing; some tawdry  
name

There was, of flower and jewel (Beryl Rose)  
Such as these stage-girls wear for baser tinsel:  
Plain Irish Maggie, as I guessed, her eyes,  
Soft meaningless Irish eyes of violet-grey,  
Dusky and wonderful. Strange how a face,  
Chance seen, will set one dreaming! . . . . .

Without, Broadway  
Screams like a slave crushed by the chariot-  
wheels  
Of Time . . . Your pardon, sir! . . . . .  
Can this be life? . .

*This!*

### LINES FOR A ROUMANIAN AIR

That you are fond of me is a bitter thing:  
The hours of my life are numbered, the hours  
take wing;  
They sweep on invisible plumes to the gulf of  
the past . .  
I could love your love if they did not vanish so  
fast!

Life is too brief to love in, I must have room  
For love—and there is no spaciousness in the  
tomb;  
We must lie alone shut in with earth on our  
eyes . .  
But our souls, you whisper, shall mingle in Para-  
dise!

### A NAMELESS EPITAPH

One lies here men did not praise,  
One who counted many days:  
Pray that death may set him free  
From labor's long monotony.

Pray that death no bond may keep  
On his ranging soul—save sleep;  
If death be sleep, pray that it be  
A passionless monotony.

Unsatisfied desire lies hid  
Within this tomb: a pyramid  
Were fitter monument to cover  
Life's truest—life's rejected lover!

## LINES FOR A LITTLE DRAWING

*(Outlined on the fly-leaf of a "New York Code of Civil Procedure")*

Fair face, most like the petals of a rose,  
I place you here to lighten this grim book  
With the enchantment of a morning look.  
The Beauty that abides may you disclose  
To some poor lawyer's clerk some future day . .  
But tempt him not! or he will pine away,  
Seeking you, seeking you, where that River flows  
(To which the Stream of Life is but a brook)  
Whose Source is nowhere, and whose Sea none  
knows.

## AUDAX

Three things I know, endure!  
The uplift of a woman's patient love;  
The undefeated Source . .  
And eloquent brief verses, such as these.

## "ANTILHA"

*( . . . probably a compound Portuguese word meaning "opposite island," or "island in the distance," and denoting any land expected to be descried on the horizon.)*

The Cambridge Modern History.

From their caravals they sought it,  
The dark-browed Portuguese,  
And the sure Time-spirit wrought it  
Out across the timeless seas . . .

"*Antilha*," set before them in the West beyond  
the verge  
Of the undiscerned horizon and the isle-forsaken  
surge!

Brutal men they were, these sailors,  
But they greatly dared for *this*:  
If the hull split, what avail oars?  
Find — or perish if you miss  
"*Antilha*!" where the stars go, dim beyond the  
beckoning wave: —  
They were cruel, these sea-rovers, they were  
crafty . . . they were brave!

That which lies beyond for ever  
Who knows when we shall find,  
Pushing our superb endeavor  
Down the pathless seas of mind?  
"*Antilha*" . . . blind before us in the West be-  
yond the verge  
Of the undiscerned horizon and the isle-forsaken  
surge!

### IRRECOVERABLE

There is one rapture lost from out the earth,  
Gone with the golden-wombèd argosies;  
Nor shall the ages grant this joy rebirth . . .  
To cleave the sun's path o'er *uncharted* seas!

## APERTO VIVERE VOTO

Gods! give me these:  
A friend to love,  
A mistress to be worthy of;  
Three or four books of stalwart verse,  
Austere and terse;  
Sufficient food to mend my body,  
A pipe, a fuming glass of toddy!

Gods! give me these, and I will write  
An "Ode To Duty" every night.

## MATINS

I give thanks for the light of day  
And the life of the errant hour;  
For a heart unshamed, I pray, —  
For a gift of power!  
Power to suffer at need  
Silently, as is best;  
And power to breathe with a zest  
(’Tis the songless road is long!)  
An untamed rapture of song  
Through the rifts of a broken reed.

## THE DÉBUTANTE

### A New York Idyl

Her name’s not Amaryllis, though she seems  
To shepherd with her eyes a flock of dreams:  
And yet, it may be, when their tale is told  
(Poor sheep, poor silly dream-sheep pastured far  
Along faint hills lit by a maiden star!)  
She will desert them for the Fleece of Gold.



## LOVE'S PILGRIMAGE

Félise, we two, we two and the wide world:  
The gusty pleasures of God's cruel sea;  
The stainless peaks, silent; the stainless stars,  
Silent; the rush of winds o'er barren moors,  
Night voices, fen fires, or the lithe unrest  
Of stripling cities in unconquered lands;  
Or the slow hush of a decaying race  
Mured in with the strait walls of yesterday . . .  
Félise, we two, we two and the wide world!

Was it not Venice lured us on to love?  
Venice, yet dreaming her voluptuous dream,  
Prodigal Venice who poured out her gold,  
Her pearls — and last her tears. And we twain  
wept  
For Venice fallen, beautiful Venice fallen,  
Wept and were comforted . . . A touch did all.

Harsh Norway taught us terrors, and our love  
Was greater for this awe; trim England gave  
Her summer hedgerows and wide peacocked  
lawns,  
Made smooth for feet of noble women dead,  
Long dead, where ivied towers rebuke the sun.  
England gave peace, and love has need of peace.

America gave power, and love has need  
Of power! Home country, home! We welcomed thee,  
Felt in our pulses the titanic swirl  
Of deep, undisciplined forces, felt the sob  
Wrung from a nation's effort, felt the uplift,  
The towering uplift of thy wrestling wings!  
With thee our love wrought greatly and was glad.

The fronded islands of Pacific seas  
Lured us to pensive languors; there our love  
Ate of the ancient lotos; we forgot  
Time and our homes and the impatient urge  
Of labor. There we dreamed such delicate  
dreams

As only flutter forth beneath far palms,  
Beneath slow moons, where the white coral glimmers,  
A floor of alabaster, and where the night  
Sighs to itself for weariest ecstasy.  
Ah, love has need of dreams — such dreams as  
these!

Félice, we two, we two and the wide world:  
Have we not shared the spume of forceful seas,  
Shared the still peaks, the crisp, metallic stars;  
Shared ribald winds howling along low wastes,  
And melancholy treacherous wildernesses;  
Shared, too, night's voices and her quivering  
fires;  
Shared the street-glare of cities in young lands;  
Shared the sad echoes of dispeopled towns,  
Where the hushed plaint is answered by a moan  
From shattered hearts and lips invisible:  
Have we not shared in all? Our love has need,  
Yea, need of all things . . . *thus!* . . . your hand  
in mine . . .

*Félice, we two, we two and the wide world.*

## HOME

The Universe is vague, is incomplete;  
A waiting void, a loneliness half stirred  
To life and fellowship; its pulses beat  
Blind rhythms long deferred.

But here, beloved, hid in this sheltered star  
We can shut out the inane titanic Whole . . .  
Cheek pressed to cheek, what matters it how far  
Lost waves through æther roll?

Hand clasped in hand, what matters it that Time  
Dooms us with rapt inexorable face,  
That when our lips have crumbled, this poor  
rhyme  
The impassioned lips may grace

Of later, lordlier lovers? . . Hush! To-night  
Our hearts lie close; we have woven a nest to  
keep  
The blank eyes of the barren vault from sight,  
And the moon's frozen sleep.

## DEFENCELESS

Last night your fingers touched my hair, your  
cheek  
Drew near, how near to mine! We dared not  
speak,  
Dreaming that love and silence were one bond,  
One guard round us for ever, that beyond  
The circle of our passionate stillness, death  
Wrought largely! . . . O brittle love, death's  
lightest breath  
Were stronger than our silence, stronger far

Than the frail bastions of sad lovers are!  
No shield have we from chance and change, no  
fence

From the sly malice of impermanence.  
Last night your kisses drownsd all love's alarms;  
To-night, *I fear* — an exile from your arms!  
Unspeakably I fear, lest fate devise  
Some secret pall to shroud you from my eyes,  
To wrap you from me even in death, to take  
All things save silence and love's silent ache.

### WAITING

But now she dallied by me, arm in arm  
With some chance, chin-receded worshipper.  
Why is it that I hold my faith in her,  
And know among the harmful she takes no  
harm?

The ball-room flares with light, no luring charm  
Numbers me one amid the incessant stir  
Of grinning faces, faces which pass and blur  
In the intricate dance. Yet feel I no alarm.

She loves me, that is all I care to know.  
She loves me, in the dance her thoughts are mine,  
Even in the dance. Youth craves felicity  
Moving within the music's rhythmic flow;  
But O more joy beats in the pulse of me  
Than in the music's passionate anodyne!

### MID-PASSION

Sweetheart, the love I bear you is not love  
Of one unvarying loveliness: your eyes  
Are lovelier than the pools of Paradise,  
Clear dark unfathomable pools whereof  
The praise of angels were not praise enough;

And through your loosened hair enchantment lies  
Golden, a lure; and when you speak hate dies  
Within ungentle hearts. Your pulseless glove  
Shakes me; the scarce heard patter of your feet  
Attunes the monotonous rumble of the street;  
The breathing of a rose upon your breast  
Drugs me to faintness! Ah, even the memory  
Of your rich smile renews the god in me,  
Making love's immanent godhead manifest!

### A LAST PLEA

Dear, if I lose you I shall lose the hope  
New risen that valorous manhood may be mine;  
I shall not seek excess for anodyne,  
Nor to unclean Cimmerian caverns grope —  
Caverns of chill dejection. But the scope,  
The vision you have found me, the divine  
Soul-draught of inspiration's crystalline,  
The will to dare immortally, to cope  
With the whole pressure of a leaden fate,  
To cope and conquer! . . . Ah, losing you I  
lose  
This, where faint life creeps to a shadowy plain.  
I shall not know henceforward joy or pain;  
I shall not love mine enemy — nor hate;  
Death I'll not summon (trust me) — nor refuse.

### INVOCATION

Let us be strong in joy, O love! I am sick  
Of sadness! Let us spurn this nether star  
Back to the void it spawned from! O love, be  
quick,  
Wing with me far from sorrow, O very far  
From faces seamed with sorrow as with a scar,  
From grievous spirits walled in upon by brick,

Who cling to life as castaways to a spar,  
Or as a spark clings to a stifled wick.

O love, let us be strong, let us be strong,  
Let not joy flee before us unendingly;  
We have been slaves — let us, O love, be free  
And make life lovelier with unfettered song!  
My sadness, love, shall spire to ecstasy . . .  
Be swift, shy wings — O tarry not too long!

### GIFTS

You give me beauty, wit, a trustful heart;  
Ah, what have I to give?  
Frayed vagrant-trappings fingered in the mart . .  
A sorry counterpart!  
You bid me live.  
Saying you love me. Why? . . I dare not ask.  
My life is yours. O, make  
Me worthier, Love, for this supremest task . .  
To *live* those gifts I take.

### WINTER EVENING — CENTRAL PARK

The pillared elms are black against the sky,  
Save where in crotch and knotted bark the snow  
Clings; as I turn, a meadow's stainless flow  
Of lilac-tempered white sweeps on the eye  
To a blurred wreath of shadow-trees, and high  
Above jut craggy piles and cut the glow  
(How faint!) with bleakest menace . . . ah,  
even so  
May giant griefs enround us when we die.

Along the measured Mall in formal row  
Sharp lights glint greenly; hurried passers-by

[illegible]

... and ...

**... THE ...**

... ..

- . ver

22

15

The State needs selfless service? Nay, the  
State  
Exists for man; shall man be slave to it?  
Philosophy, my friends, forbids no youth  
Due service, but if service mar youth's wit  
Through strife, disease, distraction, loss of truth,  
My garden offers peace . . . perhaps too late.

### THALES

Out of the veiled, inviolate South he brings  
New doctrine, Thales, the wise Ionian:  
"Water is first and shall be last, no man  
Lacking it lives; mark how the Sea enrings  
The world, how from the wind's impetuous wings  
Sweet, far-flung rain freshens a sterile earth!  
Womb of the stars and sun, it shapes for birth  
The intricate seeming of terrestrial things."

So in the dusk of Europe Thales seeks  
The Ultimate, the One; swart Egypt gives  
The Nile to him, her God, Unfolder of Grain.  
Brave, seeking Thales . . . hail! While from  
the Peaks,  
Obscure, we view thee loftily, sans stain  
Truth slides like water through our shallow  
sieves.

### "THE LAST TOKEN"

*(For a picture by Gabriel Max.)*

Robed in pure white for sacrifice she stands  
Mute, by the bleak grey wall, a child in years,  
In purity a child; little she fears  
Death, little loves the remnant of life's sands.  
Her eyes glow inward with pure vision, no bands



Fetter the innocent spirit ; with worshipping ears  
She hearkens, and a faint new music she hears  
Stirs in her prayer . . . she prays with wor-  
shipping hands.

Crept to her feet a tiger slavers and fawns  
Stung not to hasty carnage ; unseen her foes  
Peer down from echoing heights on her : she  
smiles,  
Humanly now, snatched from immaculate isles,  
As for an instant on her sight Love dawns  
Fluttering the fallen tribute of a rose.

## THE DELPHIC SYBIL

(*Michelangelo*)

Thine eyes ! they see not. If Thou look'st aside  
Tis that a *Thought* hath wrenched Thee from  
the scroll,  
Tis that an *Intuition* smites thy soul  
Even through the armor of its ancient pride.  
Mortal Thou art not, else Thou must have died  
When the *Thought* stabbed ; but thine unmatched  
control,  
Thy quenchless calm yet gird Thee, as the cowl  
Girdles thy brows. Being mortal Thou hadst  
cried,  
Cried vehemently in pain — hadst fallen ! But  
*Thou* . . .  
Thine eyes are veiled and sad ; thy lips express  
The Olympian counterpart of wistfulness :  
For the *Thought* chains Thee, tho' it cannot bow  
The twilight splendor of thy mournful brow,  
Nor, tho' it torture, make thy beauty less.

## GIORGIONE TO HIS MISTRESS

My brothers praise you with their brushes; I  
Would filch no molten metal from your hair,  
To dull on leaden canvas . . . none deny  
Your radiance! You are manifestly fair  
In the sight of all men, gracious in all turns  
Of supple womanhood, complete in all  
Mysterious harmonies art's eye discerns,  
Whose service unto you's perpetual!  
I would not limn your beauty — yet the sea  
Yearns to the moon and images its love —  
But I would hymn your heart's brave fealty  
To one unworthy the least throb thereof:  
I would proclaim your steadfastness . . . not  
show  
The shadow of a splendor all men know!

## LOOKING FORWARD

Let us suppose, dear heart, the vagrant years  
Have filched youth from us, and the promises  
Of youth; let us look forward, you and I,  
To that hour (not too distant) when our hands  
*Must* part, our eyes *must* sever images  
So long, so mutually inwrought . . . ah, then,  
Best, lovingest, what message shall our hearts  
Speak out of silence to the God of Love?

I dare not answer who have dared to ask.

## CYPSELUS

In Corinth once men feared the God, and heard  
With ears of reverent faith the Pythian word.  
And thus the God: "Lo, ye who rule, beware!  
Lest evil follow evil, and the fair

City of Corinth fall a tyrant's prey.  
For know ye not Eetion? Even to-day  
Homeward he leads the dove-eyed Labda, one  
Whom Corinth fears not . . yet shall fear her  
son."

And they who ruled, being wise, interpreted  
The Oracle: "Shall Corinth fear the *dead*?"

A twelvemonth passed. To Eetion's hearth there  
came

Welcomed, a stranger, Cypselus by name —  
First born of Labda. Beautiful was the child,  
And when the gentle Labda smiled, it smiled  
Vacantly as a baby will; no less  
Dumb smiles repay a mother's tenderness.  
But proud Eetion told the thing abroad,  
And the wise Rulers marked the thing; they nod  
One to another. Too soon the hour is set.

Ah meek-eyed Labda, in how cruel a net  
Art thou imprisoned, witless of all ill!

The house of Eetion stood beneath a hill  
Some furlongs from the city gates. Each day  
Up to the clamorous mart he took his way,  
Leaving sweet Labda and her late-born son  
Alone; — not lonely, for lustral waters run  
Close to the cottage door, and olive trees  
Silver the neighboring hill-sides, and the bees  
Hum at their honeyed toil a song of plenteous  
peace.

But those who rule must seek the general good:  
The God had spoken . . .

When the Rulers stood  
In gentle Labda's presence, one who knew  
And dreaded the black deed he had to do,  
Spoke softly in this fashion: "Lo, we come

Even thus far, for Rumor is not dumb,  
To see thy little Cypselus; men say  
So goodly a man-child hath not graced the day  
Since the old age of Heroes!" Labda smiled,  
Rich in contentment, and took up the child  
From out the cradle where it lay asleep.

Then the stern Rulers let compassion leap  
Into their breasts, and he who first had spoke  
Took from its mother's arms the babe, that woke  
Wondering, sleepy-eyed, all unafraid.  
But the ten Rulers trembled, sore dismayed  
To think so lovely a man-child must be slain;  
Nor could they see in him proud Corinth's bane,  
Being so small and tender. And he who first  
Held in his arms the baby, clucked and nursed  
The tiny fellow . . . he who had thought to slay  
A fated tyrant, dashing its brains away  
On the stone lintels of Eetion's door! . . .  
And happy Cypselus smiled. Too hard before  
Had seemed the needful slaughter; now at last  
The purpose failed. From arm to arm slow pass-  
ed

Cypselus the babe, still smiling, down the line  
Of dim-eyed Rulers; nor did any sign,  
Thunder or flight of birds, recall the doom.

But when the aged Rulers left the room,  
Then dove-eyed Labda placed young Cypselus  
In the deep cradle, and an ominous  
Dread smote upon her, and she wept, nor knew  
What devious paths the hooded Fates pursue  
Lest man outwit them and their puissance fail.

Safe in the cradle slept proud Corinth's bale,  
The tyrant Cypselus! . . . an innocent child  
Who dreamed not death forsook him when he  
smiled.

## FRAGMENT OF AN "ELECTRA"

Electra

The curse destroys too slowly. Lo, the Gods  
Couch on Olympus and forget.

Chorus

Forget not when forgotten.                   The Gods  
Have a care!

Electra

They sleep. I fear them not. Too long I feared  
Their somnolent puissance. Now I know  
My father's death is naught to the high Gods.

Chorus

Speak warily, O maiden! All too fast  
Fly the flame-wingèd messengers of the Gods.

Electra

Ay, let them flash to the dull ear of Zeus  
That the too-long-awaited vengeance fall!  
Tho' I too perish, sweet would be that doom.

Chorus

Rashly the word is spoken . .

Electra

  Nor unsaid!  
I am no mocker of the most high Gods,  
Who feel their pitiless mockery. Shall I fear  
Death, who desire death only? Death for her

Whose axe smote out my father's strength, ay  
death,  
Death for him also for whose sake he died,  
Aegisthus! Death! Ay, and for me this boon!

Chorus

These words are madness!

Electra

Like the Pythian word  
Hot from the depth of nature's wounded heart!  
Not lightly spoken from false or prattling lips.  
I speak the thing I feel; I speak but when  
I must — brief speech! Full soon in many words  
The soft lie nestles blindly . . .

Chorus

Ay yet, ah yet  
Thy words like adders fall upon thy bosom  
And sting thee only. Let silence strangle them.

Electra

Thus, then, with patient servitude ye bid  
Me wear my days out, sad, unhusbanded,  
Uncomforted of children!

Yet *he* comes,  
The dream proclaims his coming! He, my  
brother,  
Exiled from out my care! Orestes comes,  
And with his coming, lo, the day of anguish  
For impious lust and unrepented murder!

They sleep, the high Gods sleep . . but in my  
dream  
Orestes came — smote! and the wrathless Gods  
Stirred in their pleasant slumbers and awoke,  
And snuffed the sacrificial blood, and knew  
The relentless doom accomplished while they  
slept!

Chorus

Yet no dream comes unsent of the high Gods.

NECESSITY

*"Stronger than will or flesh is necessity"*  
— Ellen Glasgow

If beauty pass — is beauty less?  
Does love, tho' brief, lack loveliness?  
Who could endure a fixed caress?  
Peace! take thy moments, nor repine . . .  
As I take mine.

The strong man falls a prey to sly disease,  
Sad mothers seek lost babies on their knees,  
The winter hardens and the foodless freeze: —  
Yet summer somewhere sings amid her trees,  
And somewhere life is ease.  
Peace fool! thou canst not change it! Pay thy  
fees  
To One who holds the keys.

Lips are red a little while,  
What more fleet than frown or smile?  
Wilt thou rail for what is lost,  
Take the pleasure — curse the cost?

'Tis true that fairest cheeks must fall,  
'Tis true none see beyond the wall  
Death builds with tireless hands:—  
But the wise soul withstands  
Despair's inveterate call.  
The wise soul faints not tho' in straightening  
bands . . .  
These things are as they must be — that is all.

### FAITH

Faith was a block of marble, formless, white,  
Till wrought by nations to the idol — Truth;  
And each succeeding nation claims the right  
To chip the splendid image without ruth:  
Thus, day by day, scarred by the hopes and fears  
Of man, the idol scales and disappears.  
Faith flakes to dust; but Truth, whose image  
falls,  
Needs neither idolons nor pedestals.

### ST. BERNARD'S PRAYER TO THE VIRGIN

(Paradiso XXXIII)

Virgin and mother, daughter of thine own son,  
Both low and high passing all creature else;  
Fixed goal of the Eternal, faultless one  
In whom our human nature so excels  
Itself, He scorned not, He who fashioned it,  
To be so fashioned, in Whom all Nature dwells.  
In thy pure womb that love again was lit  
Whose warmth in lasting peace evolved this  
flower.

Here unto us thy noonday grace no whit



Is lessened, while below a living shower  
Of hope thou flowest to mortals. Lady, thou art  
So great and of so infinite a power  
That whoso seeketh grace, from thee apart,  
Would fly disdaining wings. Thy gentle care  
Aideth who asks not solely, but doth start  
Oftentimes freely forth forerunning prayer.  
In thee is pity, in thee is tenderness,  
Heaven's majesty in thee, and thou dost wear  
Singly the rose of the world's righteousness!

### LANDORIAN

Classic Aspasia! When the messenger  
Turned swiftly and departed, leaving thus  
A letter from thy Pericles — the last;  
Came there no ecstasy, no cry of pain,  
No beating of the breast, nor on those brows  
The signature of unexampled woe?  
The Gods are reticent — and thou. Perchance  
For one brief, shuddering instant then thou  
knewest  
What thy loved poets meant who sang of love.  
Perchance in that brief space their words seemed  
less  
Than one brief sigh, than one pellucid tear.

### LINES

*After Reading "The Pentameron"*

O breath of something from beyond these hills,  
Some higher heaven whence the essential sweet-  
ness  
Comes down to us imperfectly in gusts,  
Striking a faintness of pure ecstasy  
Through the minutest fibres of our beings!

Such breaths come seldom to the innocent,  
How seldom to the worldly! and, alas,  
There are who have not known them, nor shall  
know.

To me one full intoxicating pang,  
Whereat my spirit cried out for painful bliss,  
Thou hast sent down to me, O Landor, one  
For which I thank thee not in words but tears!  
For when I read Boccaccio's dream of her,  
Mary of Sicily, I seemed to grow  
Boccaccio's self, to see her in my dream,  
The golden Fiammetta, pliant, serene,  
Bearing the equal crystal, and to hear  
Her voice awakening slumberous memories  
Of youth unsatisfied, till at the last  
She leaned to kiss my brow, and her bright hair  
Brushed on my cheek . . . and she was gone. O  
Landor,

Whence came this breath from whitherward, for  
now

I rest as one who has been close to Love,  
Only to see the pallid plumes of Peace  
Depart, and (turning) find Love too has fled.

### NOCTURNE

Here is no sound for comfort, here  
A single voice might break the spell  
Of silence rendered terrible,  
Of silence deepened into fear;  
There is no sound of voices here.

Dumb, soulless streets where nothing is  
But still, interminable rain,  
Where are your gracious folk? The pain  
Of loneliness is over this  
Immobile place where nothing is.

If anything should turn or pass  
Within these unsubstantial ways,  
'Twould be the ghost of other days,  
A breath still lingering on the glass  
Of Time . . or Time himself might pass.

Time, with a finger half upraised  
As one who warns, as one who feels  
An end of things and blindly steals  
Forth from the peril, weak and dazed:  
Time . . with a feeble finger raised.

### ART FOR THE SOUL'S SAKE

No cunning of mere craft can cozen long  
In fresco, bust, or song.

A world may praise, but when the rapture dies  
May not the world despise?

Only the master workers shall endure,  
Who wrought being sane and sure.

First the deep heart, the athlete mind, and then  
The chisel, brush, and pen!

### LOST

Deep in the silent hours I sit  
Where love's long memories abide;  
And yet I have forgotten it,  
I have forgotten why she died.

Was it, perhaps, because the earth  
Loves not her flowers nor mothers them,  
Holding their eyes of little worth,  
Mere gewgaws for her garment's hem?

Or was it that she could not find  
A stainless air to breathe, or truth  
To hearken on the lips of youth,  
Nor kindness where few hearts are kind?

Or was it rather that she found  
All things imperfect, and her soul  
Shrank from the shrill Walpurgis round  
Of life and elsewhere softly stole?

For now she walks not in the ways  
Her feet a little time made fair,  
Nor is her voice heard anywhere  
Whose timid accent sweetened praise.

Lost in these arid hours I sit  
Where memory's eidolons abide;  
Ah yet, I have forgotten it —  
I have forgotten why she died.

### CIRCE

All men have sung of Circe; most have seen  
Her cruel, sensitive lips; her eyes half green,  
Half gold, with feline pupils; most have heard  
Her sibilant, sly tongue hissing a secret word.  
I, too, have spied her where a marble shell  
Spilled turquoise water shimmering as it fell  
Into a placid pool with lilies strown;  
And I have heard the unsyllabled soft moan  
Of mating doves steal on my senses where  
She lay in treacherous beauty, naked and brown  
and lithe  
As the lean lovely serpents she let writhe  
Under her breasts and through her splendid hair!  
No hogs saw I low wallowing in the mire . . .  
Only the sluggish snakes about her zone;

And near that forest wherein the stock-doves  
moan,  
Voluptuous leopards yawning with desire.

### MARTHA

Age, sharp, unreverend, crowns you as with  
thorns,  
Martha, for you are old, but not in years;  
Old in the suffering servitude that bléars  
The eye, yellows the cheek, and sternly warns  
Us, through your presence, of the impatient  
scorns  
Unlovely labor bears you. What hope, what  
fears  
Are yours, Martha? What ache of unshed tears?  
What meagre withering spirit that cowers and  
mourns?

There is a vacant pathos in your stare,  
A dreadful fixity of glance, a look  
Of passionless and of purposeless control.  
Thou, Death! Canst thou erase as from a book  
These lines of wonted grief? Canst render fair  
The crippled vesture of this crippled soul?

### LINES WRITTEN ON THE FLY LEAF OF THE UNIVERSE"

*I questioned my heart, and it said:*  
By the truth you shall live,  
By the truth you shall die!  
If you sin there is none to forgive —  
Who shall ransom the dead?  
In the truth they have died — for a lie.

Though the words of your mouth are as dust  
That is blown to and fro  
At the will of the wind,  
You shall live, for the truth makes it so,  
You shall die, for you must —  
Having suffered the truth, having sinned.

All the truth is just this that you see  
Yet see not, being blind,  
Nor endeavor to hear.  
What you seek, being true, you shall find;  
Being false, shall you be  
Perfected in vision — a seer?

There is nothing afar that the earth  
Cannot yield to your quest,  
Cannot serve for your need.  
What seek ye on earth — is it rest?  
Or seems labor more worth?  
Found your freedom in life on a deed!

Are you tired? You shall sleep having toiled,  
And your hands shall be still,  
And your eyes shall be closed:  
You are one with the Infinite Will —  
And the truth is not foiled;  
*Nor the Man, nor the Master deposed.*

## FORGIVENESS

God hated her! . . . But I — I loved her well.  
She had such ways as win upon the heart;  
A trick of chiming like a silver bell  
Sweet thriftless words that make the pulses start:  
A lying favor coaxed from nether Hell,  
More like to magic than to mortal art.

God hated her? . . . Perhaps. I only know  
Her mouth was quaintly poisoned with a smile.  
I but remember that her voice was low,  
More honey-thick with passion than with guile.  
Can I forgive, if God — ? Ah, be it so!  
She will not seem less beautiful the while.

## A WORD OF PROTEST

"He should be happy—he has youth, and friends;  
High hopes; the world's abundance." Ay, all  
these

I have, yet am not happy. None who bends  
Grave thought to the world's secret ever frees  
The burden of unprofitable years  
From off his shoulders: for he seeks and sees  
The pallid faces and the stained with tears.

There should be none alive whom happiness  
Has dwelled with in continuance; for none  
Are free to hold their fate aloof and bless  
Each cloistered moment with a joy begun.  
There should be none alive whom joy can touch  
With long completeness, lest one mortal shun  
Just deeds that call on pity overmuch.

Youth is not all a blessing, nor are friends  
Sure plyers of life's lamp with fragrant oil;  
High hopes are masters which some mocker  
sends

To shame our lives with uneffectual toil.  
The world's abundance is but bread and wine;  
What more I have a little thought shall spoil  
Of any splendor: "Having dined — I dine."

Is this the sum? Not all; for much is here  
To wake forbearance and to foster love.  
Who worships happiness is not the seer:  
Life's hand is naked; happiness, a glove.  
Let men look forth with sobered eyes and know  
What lacks to all men they were boasting of:  
Joy! — that of all things is the first to go.





***Milicent and Mirabella***



## MILICENT AND MIRABELLA

### An Interlude

TO F. C.

*"If you will sing, let it be cheerily  
Of dallying love. There's many a one among you  
Hath sung, beneath our oak trees to his maiden,  
Light bird-like mockeries fit for love in spring  
time.*

*Sing such a one."*

*T. L. Beddoes.*

### SCENE FIRST

#### THE TOWER

Milicent, *gravely*

So now *I* have a lover . . .

Mirabella, *fingers her lute*

O, play upon him!

Give me a lover, give me a pretty lover,  
And of his sighs I'll weave me harmonies  
More various and delightful than these fingers  
Have won me ever from lute or clavichord.  
I love a pretty lover!

Milicent

Hush, Mirabella,  
Lest Cupid hear you mock him and undo you.  
— If you should love in earnest!

Mirabella

Love is but play.

You know, Milicent, how the stories tell  
Of blue eyed Princes and the like: it may be  
Such Princes lived, slew dragons, and were slain  
To win one eye-beam from their ladies' eyes . .  
I say it may be, Milicent.

Milicent

Why, truly,

Florio swore if I gainsaid his love  
He would rip up his bosom to reveal  
The image cherished there — a cruel mistress.  
But I believed him not.

Mirabella

Love is but play:

A few stray glances, a smile, a tearful face  
Kissed into silence underneath the moon,  
And then the bubble quavers — vanishes;  
The dream is ended. I have known such dreams.  
— So Florio loves you?

Milicent

Dotingly!

Mirabella

Poor fellow!

— And now I grieve for him, I'll shed one tear  
For Vivian — Vivian's a perfect lover:  
Too earnest though, and just a little bit  
Conventional in manner. Why, think, Milicent,

By day he haunts the loneliest corridors,  
Mocking his love with shadows; by night he  
climbs  
Up through the ivy to my window lattice  
And sings me gently into sleep; but then,  
So one has told me, he wanders madly forth  
Along far meadows calling to the moon.  
I must speak kindlier to him; I fear he grows  
A shade too thin for beauty. But O, Milicent,  
I shall grow tired of him — he's melancholy!  
No fire, no rapid jest! Your Florio  
Seems livelier — keep him so. These silent lovers  
Look miserably well in tapestry,  
But make one yawn (a little) while on duty.

Milicent

Nay, but you're wrong there! Florio's much too  
flippant.  
I had grown tired of *him* before I knew  
He loved me. Tell me, pray, if any lover,  
Famed in a song, went ever laughing forth  
From the immediate presence of his love?  
'Tis Florio's way! He loves me and he laughs —  
At me? — I've sealed your lips. Not that I fear  
them.  
But he's too fat, and eats — come, Mirabella,  
What think you of my Florio, my loverling,  
Grown plump on four good meals a day?

Mirabella

— A trade!  
Florio for Vivian — Vivian for Florio!

Milicent

What do you mean?

Mirabella

A trade! A trade! A trade!  
I am in love with smiling; I'll no more  
Of Vivian! Florio beckons me!

Milicent

But how — ?

Mirabella

Are you agreed? I'll find the way.

Milicent

Agreed!

Romance for raillery!

Mirabella

Wit for a sheaf of ballads!

Milicent

Vivian!

Mirabella

Florio!

*A tapestry is lifted. Enter Florio and Vivian.*

Vivian and Florio, *bowing*

Ladies, at your service!

Milicent, *apart to Mirabella*

What have they heard?

Mirabella, *apart to Milicent*

Their names: they came but now  
And entered with their names. — Ah, Vivian,  
You heard us call?

Vivian

I heard you, Mirabella.

Mirabella

Come, then, and sit beside me.

(*apart to Milicent*)

— Tell Florio  
To meet you by the cypress with the moon;  
Hush, go to him — I'll to you presently . .

(*to Vivian, who reclines himself at her feet*)

My gentle Vivian!

Florio, *to Milicent, kissing her hand*

My sweet Milicent!



SCENE SECOND  
THE FOREST GLADE

The Lover, *without, sings*

Merrily, merrily sang the birds,  
Merrily too sang I;  
My song was all of joyous words  
As Annabelle sped by;  
My song was all of joyous words,  
They seemed to soar and fly!  
Merrily, merrily sang the birds —  
*Love is not born to die.*

Bitterly, bitterly sang the wind,  
Bitterly too sang I;  
My song was of a maid that sinned  
When summer's tide ran high.  
My song was of a maid that sinned,  
It sounded like a cry!  
Bitterly, bitterly sang the wind —  
*Love is not born to die.*

*Enter The Lover.*

The Lover

Well, lady Owl, how goes the world with you?  
Blindly? A truthful answer. — And with me?  
— Blindly . . . I'd tell you of a certain fellow  
Who loved a lady, beautiful enough,  
With tender eyes and a most servile hand  
That fawned caressingly upon his shoulder  
When he lay at her feet, as it would say —  
"I know you love me and am not afraid."  
He loved her, lady Owl, after his fashion  
Some twenty months, and then . . .

Fa, la! She is flown,  
Clumsily! — Nay, I'll sing to myself: 'tis better  
To sing than weep. Heigh ho! How runs the  
ballad?

Within a deadly forest  
Wandered a barren fool;  
His head was heavy,  
His head was heavy  
As the lily's by the pool.

He sighed and then he whispered  
A name of mystery:  
'Twas Annabella,  
'Twas Annabella  
He whispered dolefully.

His cap and bells were lacking,  
His eyes were grey with tears;  
And O the groaning,  
And O the groaning  
This deadly forest hears!

Meantime within the palace  
Lightly a maiden sang —  
A truce to folly,  
A truce to folly,  
Let lovers all go hang!

Scurvily sung! A double truce to folly!  
I'll seek my lady Owl; she comforts me.

*As he passes out, enter Vivian and Florio,  
muffled.*

Florio

So! we have learned a lesson. Now to teach one!  
Be round with her, and let each word, a jibe,  
Stick in her heart.

Vivian

And do not you forget  
To wear a vizard of love melancholy,  
Putting forth sighs as the quick earth in Spring  
Breathes out in violets.

Florio

O trust me, brother!  
I will exhale a very weeping humor,  
Talk little, and that little of the moon.  
— Think you we shall deceive them?

Vivian

Cunningly!  
We are twinned in height, and for my girth this  
cloak  
Will add a roundness to my sparer figure.  
Then they who plan deceit suspect none.

Florio

Truth!

But for our voices we were safe . .

Vivian

Fear nothing.  
I'll ape your tones, whilst you, the silent lover,  
Speaking but seldom shun discovery.  
Look you, the moon! I'll to my place.

Florio

And I,  
Loosening the girdle of false grief, to mine.

*Exeunt severally. The glade brightens. Enter  
Milicent and Mirabella.*

Mirabella

Alack, you have spoiled the rarest fun to-night!

Milicent

Alas, I am a coward, Mirabella!

Mirabella

For the last time, will you not change with me,  
Milicent? All goes smoothly, and see! the moon  
Marks the self hour we purposed for our jest.

Milicent

Ah, no — I dare not. I'll not act this part,  
Like lovers tangled in a comedy,  
Lest laughter end in tears.

Mirabella

You will desert me?

Milicent

I must . .

Mirabella

Put we our masks on. O, Milicent,  
If you would hold our bargain! But Florio —  
You cannot part with Florio? You love him?

Nay, if your heart sets like a silly shallop  
Straight to the port of marriage, I'll not blow  
Cross winds . . . Farewell.

Milicent

Forgive me, Mirabella . . .

Mirabella

Poor child, you love him ; you are in the dream.  
Go to him by the cypress. Vivian  
Shall weep my disappointment with his tears.

Milicent, *aside, going*

And yet I think you love him . . .  
Fare you well.

*Exeunt. The Lover, without, sings*

Once a lover loved a lass  
In spring's dreamy weather  
(Every lover is an ass!),  
And they sighed together.

All day long he told her tales  
Of the fires that burned him  
(Love's the fire that soonest pales!),  
Till the maiden spurned him.

*Enter Mirabella and Florio, both masked.*

Then all night he cursed her eyes,  
Killing with unkindness  
(Every lover all but dies!),  
Then he cursed love's blindness.

And the maiden shed a tear,  
Only one for sorrow:  
(Love's a truant, that is clear;  
He'll fly home to-morrow!)

Mirabella, *wearily*

— Vivian, what song was that?  
It came from out the bosom of the wood  
Mockingly, like the sigh of false despair.

Florio, *aside*

By all the tricky gods! I know that voice:  
It is not hers I love . . . Well, Vivian,  
I'll play your part, but to another purpose:  
You may have cause to thank me.

Mirabella

Sir Tragedy!  
Why do you mutter? Have you no friendlier  
tongue?

Florio

None, Mirabella.

Mirabella, *aside*

— Cold, cold: shall Vivian change?

Florio, *sighs deeply*

Woe's me, I do not love you, Mirabella.

(*aside*)

Now God requite the truth of this!

Mirabella

What Vivian,  
Have you forgot your vows? Dare you speak  
this?  
You do not love me — *you?* O you have sworn  
Your soul away in lover's oaths!

Florio

False vows

Weigh down the heart!

Mirabella

Ah, now I know false vows  
Lie ever on men's lips! . . In very truth,  
Do you not love me?

*Enter Vivian, humming gaily, followed by  
Milicent. Both are masked.*

Florio, *draws Mirabella aside*

Hist — see! Stand we apart  
And listen . . .

Vivian, *dancing forward*

Come, lady, come! The world's in masquerade,  
And Love leads all the revels! Cheerly, cheerly!  
How now! Look up! Lilt at the winking stars  
Who hold love's folly but a thing of air,  
Fantastically mirthful! Come, let's kiss,  
And wind a mutual galliard down the glade!  
I hold these weeping lovers as mere fools!  
Life's but an instant, love a part of it —

A pity then to spend that part in tears!  
Sing me a virelay!

Milicent, *aside*

Why, this is Vivian,  
Playing a sorry masque. He does not know me.  
Gently!— I'll humor him . . .

Dear Florio,  
I love you well — you have a smiling heart!

(*aside*)

And so I do.

Vivian, *aside*

She loves him well . . .

(*wildly*)

— O, then  
I'll play a part no more! Go, seek your love!  
Look, Mirabella!

(*unmasks suddenly*)

Milicent, *unmasks*

But where is Mirabella?

Vivian

Milicent! . . . Where indeed?

Mirabella, *comes from the shadow*

Here, Vivian!

O, I have been deceived — I hate . . .



Vivian, *takes her in his arms*

Not so —

You love me, Mirabella.

Milicent

Where's Florio?

Florio, *steps forward*

Here at your side, Milicent. — Mirabella,  
Will you forgive me that I did not love you?

Mirabella

Graciously . .

Milicent, *to Vivian*

And, sir clown, will you forgive me  
That I loved Florio?

Vivian

With all my heart!

Florio, *to Milicent*

Then join we our twain pardons in a kiss!

Milicent, *prevents him*

First say how came this coil!

Florio

Ask Vivian!

Vivian

Nay, I'll not tell you! Question Florio . .

Florio

Explain this, Milicent . .

Milicent

See, Mirabella,  
The knot is in your hand — pull at the cord!

Mirabella

Let this knot hold unravelled; its fateful thread  
Binds up our hearts.

Florio, *kisses Milicent*

Gladly, we are content.

*They pass without. Enter The Lover, singing.*

The Lover

Anywhere for love, say I,  
Anywhere for love;  
On the earth, or in the earth,  
Or up the sky above!

Once I loved a lily girl  
On the earth so green,  
Once I loved a lily girl,  
Fairer never seen.

But they laid my lily girl  
In the earth so brown,  
And I sought my lily girl  
Where the sun goes down.

If I find my lily girl  
Up the sky so blue,  
There I'll love my lily girl  
While the stars shine through.

Anywhere for love, say I,  
Anywhere for love;  
On the earth, or in the earth,  
Or up the sky above.

*As the song concludes he loiters slowly from the  
glade and is lost to view.*

NOW HERE ENDS

MILICENT AND MIRABELLA

AN INTERLUDE

---

*"Leaf after leaf, like a magician's book."*

FROM THE BOOK OF YOUTH

*Stray Leaves and Notes i' the Margin*



. . . Once upon a time there was a beautiful island, midway the North and the South. On this island lived an old old man, of reverend seeming, famous for magical arts and darker wisdom.

Now one day a maiden, very tender in the eyes and lips, came to him, speaking thus:

"O father, for some little flight of years have I wandered hither and thither in a fair bramble garden, though not of my own accord. Roses are in the garden, many petalled, blood red in color, and so plentiful that an hundred might be taken and no loss perceived. Of these, dear father, I am desirous of gathering to myself a garland, but fear to do so lest my hands be torn by their sharp and envenomed thorns."

Little is recorded of the sage's counsel to the maiden; but on the page where this simple tale stands written is a picture quaintly illuminated with purple and crimson and burnished gold. It presents an old reverend man leading a maiden by the hand down a path bordered with rose bushes in abundant bloom. The roses are one and all the color of blood.

A smile of wonderful sweetness lightens the old man's face, like sunshine on still water. The maiden's bearing is melancholy; she steps slowly on, and her eyes follow the path before her. And one other thing in this little picture is very singular; with her disengaged hand the maiden press-

es several withered roses to her heart. Many petals have fallen from her fingers by the way, and one is cunningly limned as fluttering down across the hem of her robe like a fleck of blood.

This picture seems in some sort to complete the tale in the rubric, and one might take the whole for an allegory, if it were not written for a fact. It is strange, however, that so wise an old man is shown to us smiling in the garden, and that the artist gives to the maiden — who is said to have been worshipfully fair — downcast eyes and reluctant moving feet. But the roses are well colored, and the fallen petals crumpled and curled with unerring craft. For were they not pressed to the heart of the maiden? . . . and rose petals are ever delicate and perishable.

No less it would be very sad to see them fallen along the path if there were not so many roses in the garden.

## I

No question; youth is past.  
The scornful hours have buried him at last.

What has youth left behind?  
Only these scattered leaves for age to bind.

Is it worth while? Who knows?  
In youth we dare to dally with the rose.

Peace; read youth's song with tears . . .  
Persistent fragrance sweetening the years

Youth dying leaves to age.  
Is it enough? Ah, gently — turn the page.

## II

### YOUTH'S NOCTURNE

*Dear heart, the light of heaven is in your face,  
Lending your smile a grace, a witchery  
Beyond earth's minstrelsy.*

Pale moonwaifs waken in the trees  
Unnumbered mysteries, and in your eyes  
Delicate dreams arise.

Quaint forms of insubstantial things  
Weave silver-silken rings, within the leaves  
Something there is that grieves.

Charmed silence else is over us;  
Forgot the fume and fuss of mortal tongue,  
Forgot the song unsung.



Remembered only eyes are blue,  
Made piteous with the dew that love distills  
Against our tranced wills —

What time the moon spins through the night  
Her manifold web of light, to tangle all  
Hearkening love's perilous call.

(Love's perilous call, remote, forlorn,  
A rueful elfin horn breathing apart  
How lonely is the heart.)

O pensive wondernight, with tears  
The mute reproachful years will blot, men say,  
Your moon, will steal away

The passion and the terror and  
The dream that might not stand for daytime  
truth  
Stirred in the heart of youth.

— *Sweetheart, the light of heaven is in your face,  
Lending your smile a grace, a fantasy  
Beyond earth's melody.*

### III

### SONG

If I tell you life is sad, love,  
Will you answer love is sweet?  
Ah, but think of those who had love  
But to lose it, cruel mad love —  
Swift as flame and sharp as sleet!

If I tell you love is sweet, dear,  
Will you answer life is sad;

While the nimble minutes fleet, dear,  
Banished kisses — is it meet, dear?  
Kiss me, tell me life is glad.

#### IV

Life, life within me flowing  
A swift elusive fire —  
Life, life within me growing  
An ultimate desire!

O life, for love, for laughter,  
For joy of hurried breath,  
Say shall I know thee after —  
Strange in the mask of death?

Shall death be as thy brother  
Within whose eyes I'll see  
The gleam no earth can smother,  
The lusty pride of thee?

Or shall I lose thy presence,  
The glad prevailing grace  
Weft-woven in thine essence  
And regnant on thy face?

O life within me glowing  
With ever waning fires,  
Say whither thou art going,  
Whither my lost desires!

Whither the feet of lasses,  
Whither the daisy train,  
Each maiden as the grass is,  
And graceful as the grain;

Whither the eyes now tearless,  
Once tenderest of blue,  
Whither the hearts now fearless,  
Once fearful unto you —

Whither the song, and whither  
The singer's pregnant tongue!  
For wilding flower-folk wither  
And only youth is young:

And the lust of love and laughter  
And the joy of hurried breath  
Are gone with youth, and after  
Life's carnival comes death.

V

LUTE SONG FOR . . . . .

Look into her eyes and see  
They are kind but cold to thee.

When I look into her eyes  
Sad unnumbered things arise  
Like a mist between us twain —  
Love, the poet, dreams again.

Touch her hand to strangely feel  
Holy things within you kneel.

When I take her hand in mine  
Like a perfume born of wine  
Comes the pageant o'er my brain —  
Love, the poet, dreams again.

## VI

### AVANT AVRIL

You ask a song, Claudette?  
I dare not; I  
Am frozen in winter's net,  
Too numb to fly!

I must have room for song,  
Earth, air, and sea,  
To riot, to scud along . .  
Song's soul is free!

I cannot sing for you  
As I would sing,  
Till the domed sky be blue,  
Till I can fling

My body on ripe grass,  
Or run at will  
Where harlequin shadows pass  
Over the hill!

I cannot rhyme today  
Pent within walls,  
My dreams are stiffened clay,  
No pulse recalls

The rhythms of the spring!  
Alas, Claudette,  
When the hour bids me sing —  
Will *you* forget?

## VII

Some love lasses for loveliness,  
And 'tis a desirable quality;  
Some love 'em for fortune, and some for dress,  
And some for flaring frivolity:  
But the lass I love, O the lovely lass  
Gives little heed to her looking-glass!  
She tilts her head with a shy surprise  
And lights me the living smile of her eyes!

The earth they say is a cooling star,  
And love, says the Cynic, irrational;  
But be you in Dublin or Malabar  
'Tis a failing you'll find is national:  
And the lass I love, O the lovely lass  
Gives little heed to the bray of an ass;  
She tilts her head with a sweet surprise  
And lights me the living love in her eyes!

## VIII

OYEZ! OYEZ!

If any anywhither in any ambuscade  
Can wing the wingèd felon by whom I was way-  
laid,  
Tie, tie his wings together, transfix him with his  
dart,  
And bring me home a feather dyed red from  
Love's own heart!

Such verses it will write  
Shall turn my mistress to me,  
Whose glance is living light  
Sharp-piercing through and through me.

I'll set it in my cap  
Where she may look upon it  
And weep Love's heavy hap —  
Who mocks my lightest sonnet!

Ah, hurry, hurry hence, sirs, hale him hither  
privily;  
I will repay his capture, who late hath captured  
me: —  
And yet he comes so comely — nay, prithee, *set*  
*him free!*

## IX

Flower, fairy flower,  
Deep in your breast  
Is there a heart,  
Flower, fairy flower?

Thus in the west  
Forth from the clouds  
Comes a red stream  
Out from the west.

Lo, the flood crowds  
Up to your lips,  
Wondrously deep —  
Pulses and crowds

Till your head dips  
Down with the weight,  
Languidly fair,  
Witchingly dips.

This be your fate  
Flower, fairy flower —

Burn by her cheek  
(Mine be your fate).

Whisper the hour,  
Glow 'neath her lips —  
Tell her my love  
Flower, fairy flower.

X

To sing of fallen tears is folly.  
Be mine a modern lay  
Blowing a kiss to melancholy  
Just by the way.

For though she seem thus lowly wise,  
Clad round with sable gear,  
There is a languor in her eyes  
That poets fear.

Her lips are close with subtle cunning,  
Save when they fold a kiss  
On some lad's lips and send him running  
To hell for bliss.

Crossed hands are quiet on her breast;  
Natheless I doubt the jade  
Has felt her bosom madly pressed  
By lips betrayed.

Still is she seemly in her view —  
Be it enough for me  
To toss the wench a kiss or two,  
Or maybe three.

## XI

Tell the tale and let it pass —  
What's the tale when all is told?  
Youth is busied with a lass,  
Age is wearied with a scold;  
Sunshine warms the summer grass,  
But the graves beneath are cold.

Tell the tale and let it pass —  
Truth's a masquer, that is plain.  
(Now a prophet on an ass,  
Now a builder up of Spain!)  
Sunshine gilds the summer grass,  
But the shades beneath remain.

Tell the tale and let it pass —  
Where's the wisdom of the rose?  
Beauty is not built of brass  
But 'tis beauty till it goes.  
Smile if sunshine gilds the grass  
Since it breaks no long repose.

Tell the tale and let it rest —  
True or false what matters it?  
Hearts still beat at love's behest;  
Sorrow never silenced wit.  
If the sunshine serve for test,  
Mark the shades where lovers sit.

Tell the tale out and have done —  
Weary business this delay!  
Youth spins falsehood in the sun;  
Age embodies it — in clay.  
Anyhow the tale's begun,  
Let each babbler have his say.



## XII

You do not understand?

— Ah, Gabriel,  
I, a poor girl whose body God hath formed  
With rare perfection, tender grace of line,  
A beauty singular, such as of old  
Men carved from marble, or these looser days,  
Blending the harmonies of hue and line,  
Trace on rude canvas, or on palace walls —  
I, Aphrodite, Phryne, at your will  
As art or fancy lead you, I (even I,  
The perfect shell, the exquisite frame of flesh!)  
I, even I, have yet a hint of soul.  
A something in me not to be repressed,  
A passion men call Love . . . . .

*Ah, Gabriel,*

*You do not, for you will not understand!*

## XIII

### THE IMMUTABLE

I have builded me a woman, fairer none,  
I have builded me a woman for my dreams;  
From the porches of the palace of the sun  
I have stolen fire, and from unearthly streams  
The clearness of their waters and the sound  
Of their rapids and the coolness of their flow  
Have I stolen, and from out the whirling round  
Of the Universe such things as poets know:  
I have moulded them and made them purely  
white,  
Have fashioned them in likeness of a maid  
To whom the clear of heaven were perfect night,

Within whose eyes such night were scarce a  
shade;  
In likeness of a maid, but on her breast  
Where snow might rest unheeded, by my art  
(That none shall hope) have I made manifest  
The single passion of a bloodless heart.

#### XIV

#### LYRIC WAYFARING —

##### *A Prologue For Summer*

Song, if I shall give you speed,  
Speed and strength to my desire,  
Go you forth along the mede  
Where lithe timothy's aswing,  
Go you forth a simple thing  
Clothed with rapture as with fire.

Learn of all the wilding ways  
Thriftless secrets known to them,  
Learn the lore of summer days,  
Lore of leaf and bud and stem,  
Learn to praise the things they praise  
Weaving beauty for content's  
Coronal or diadem.

*Mysteries the elements  
Of a final mystery!*

Song, go forth and touch the quick  
Soul of things (I ask no more)  
Where the sun sheds soft and thick  
Sudden things that scoot and flee

All along the earthen floor ;  
Song go forth (I ask no more)  
Where the flower-folk are fair,  
Whisper them I love the sheen  
Of their incense strewing hair ;  
Tell them (sighing) of the green  
Waves that lap the golden stair  
When close shadows mass and pore  
Round the palace of the air —  
When the sun is made aware . . .

*(Whisper low — and further spare.)*

Further spare, but bring to me  
Something of unheedful glee,  
Something of the innocence  
Ignorant of time's events  
Haply you have gathered there.

## XV

I ask no blessing on my life  
Thrice blessed with song ;  
I only ask a country lane  
To sing along.

A country lane with frequent grass  
And wayside flowers,  
A little lazy lane for ease  
Of quiet hours.

A lane that leads beneath close trees  
To some sly nook  
With moss and ferns that bend anear  
A shallow brook.

Here leave me for a singing space  
Where nothing is  
Unmusical, a wayfellow  
Content with this!

Glad of the cool prevailing shade  
No contrast mars,  
Glad of the gradual dusk of things,  
Glad of the stars

When stealthy night is round about  
My woodland eaves  
With whisperings and tuneless thrills  
Midway the leaves.

Here leave me with forgetfulness  
A little time,  
And I will give you from my store  
A restful rhyme.

## XVI

Julia's laugh is like a river,  
Deep and calm and true —  
Flashing sometimes in a shallow,  
Glinting sometimes with a shiver,  
Glassy smooth where fields lie fallow —  
Bringing gladness home to you.

## XVII

### TO PHYLLIS

Phyllis, O Phyllis of the many rhymes,  
Were you indeed so fair, dear?  
Your poet lovers all unnumbered times  
Deem you beyond compare, dear:

Was there not one who turned from you to smile  
Upon some other girl a straying while?

Were your eyes ever star-like, ever bright,  
Did never tears invade them?  
And those trim lips like cherries, did no blight  
Of unkind kisses fade them?  
Within your cheeks were there forever blent  
Roses and lilies for love's wonderment?

You have been shepherdess and won the heart  
Of many a foolish Thyrsis,  
Who cherished close love's elemental smart  
And wrought it out in verses;  
And you have been the supersubtle dream  
Of fettered idlers by a fettered stream.

— And now? Nay, it is good to worship air  
If solid matter fail us!  
The scantest poet hath some love to spare  
For love; — when doubts assail us  
Phyllis, we turn to you and find at last  
Our golden age linked with a golden past.

O Phyllis, Phyllis of the many songs,  
Are you still blithe to-day, dear?  
Shall wilful Gretchen suffer all the wrongs  
And you not have to pay, dear,  
For any little slip . . . forgive me, please —  
No Phyllis ever made such slips as these.

Well then, I too must praise you if indeed  
Earth may not dim your beauty;  
To praise perfection is a poet's creed,  
To slave for it his duty.  
Your simple duty, Phyllis, is to be  
Some poet's symbol through eternity.

## XVIII

Love has passed me by ;  
But I know a face  
Whose diviner eye  
Love's self well might grace.  
Love has passed me by.

Love has passed me by ;  
But a voice I hear  
Sweeter than love's sigh,  
Truer than love's tear.  
Love has passed me by.

Love has passed me by ;  
But the face I see  
Fades not though the sky  
Darken over me.  
Love has passed me by.

Love has passed me by ;  
But a voice still sings  
Tender words that fly  
Thick like shadowings.  
Love has passed me by.

Love has passed me by  
Working not his will,  
Though one hover nigh —  
Beauty's self. Ah, still  
Love has passed me by.

## XIX

Dream? Do I dream because the masque of life  
Lives ever in my thoughts? Because I see  
Now clearly, now as some far mystery  
Unresting phantasies of hope and strife?

Is it to dream, idly, if like a knife  
Stabbing, some woman's anguish sever me  
From all save pity? — to dream, when piteously  
Come comfortable gleams of babe and wife?

Nay, then, I dream! Not gladly, nor as one  
Who broods above the mutable masquerade  
Wearily, wearily . . . not as these I dream.

But as a boy, musing by some wished stream,  
Loiters, now deep in shade and now in sun,  
Even so I dreaming lapse from sun to shade.

## XX

Let the rose fall, I care not,  
And let youth pass,  
Since she I love can spare not  
Her image from the glass  
To glad mine eyes.

Let beauty fade, let pleasure  
Link hands with pain;  
My love hath now no leisure  
To love my love, disdain  
Sits in her eyes.

But O, let not her vision  
Fail from my ken!

Now my love gives derision,  
Frankly she gave me then  
Love from her eyes.

And in remembered glances  
I take my bliss  
(Freed from love's blinder chances),  
Each memory like a kiss  
Sealing mine eyes.

## XXI

My muse is wilder  
Than any brook,  
Scarce I beguiled her;  
My hand she took

As one who trembles  
Lest for her wrong  
False love dissembles  
His heart in song.

Truth I dissembled,  
Meaning to keep  
(What though she trembled!)  
Her fears asleep.

But she eludes me  
Shy to the end;  
Too fierce her moods be  
Ever to mend.

No safe empiric,  
She foams along  
Plunged in a lyric —  
Drowned in a song!





## VALE

Songs of my youth, go, beard the world,  
Seek for yourselves new masters!  
What force have wings for ever furled . .  
What strength who shun disasters?

Go forth, and fight alone; farewell!  
No more my cares attend you;  
Though children of my thought, the spell  
That formed cannot befriend you.

Henceforth we travel alien ways,  
Firm in despite of sorrow:  
He only sings of yesterdays  
Who dare not face to-morrow.









